

1. Introduction

1.1 Life and Works of R.K. Narayan

Rasikpuram Krishnaswamy Iyer, popularly known as R. K. Narayan, was born in Madras on October 10, 1906. His grandmother taught him Sanskrit verses and told him stories from Indian Epics. He got love, affection as well as discipline from his grandmother. During his teenage, Narayan moved to Mysore where his father was the headmaster of a high school. Mysore was very different from Madras with such natural and manmade beauty and Narayan rambled around a good deal and tried writing poetry, which was much appreciated by his friends.

He learnt Hindu myths and epics from his grandmother which became the inspiring materials for his writing career later. He spent his early years with his grandmother and uncle. Later, he joined his parents, brothers and sisters in the family home in Mysore. According to his memories, he was never particularly enthusiastic about academic work. Narayan had his education entirely in South India. He attended Lutheran Missionary School and Christian College and in 1930 received his B.A. from Maharaja's college. He devoted himself to write in modern India literature. His mother tongue was Tamil. He settled down in Mysore where the regional language was Kannada. But he has written novels and short stories purely in English which made him famous in the literary field.

Narayan married to Rajam in 1935. She did not know English but she was very much interested in the work of her husband. She always remained as a source of inspiration for him. Narayan has reflected Rajam's character and personality in many of his women characters. But unfortunately Narayan's happiness could not last long as Rajam died due to typhoid in 1939, leaving a young daughter, Hema. Her death was a

shattering experience for Narayan and taught him the reality of life. We find autobiographical elements in some of his works, especially in *The English Teacher*.

Narayan was born in a middle class Hindu family and brought up in a traditional Indian society which has influenced his writing. In his father's school, Narayan read a number of British and American magazines and novels which made him acquainted with Western culture. On the other hand, he learnt Hindu culture in India in general and he was guided by his parents and grandparents about the importance of native culture in particular. So, we find admixture of these two cultures in his writing that is explicit in *The Dark Room*.

He worked for *The Madras Journal* that provided an opportunity to meet a wide variety of people, many of whom provided him the characters for his novels.

Narayan began his literary career with short stories which appeared in newspapers, he made a significant contribution to the development of the Indo- Anglian novel. Professor Walsh holds the views, "If Anand is the novelist as reformer, Raj Rao is the novelist as a metaphysical poet. Narayan is simply the novelist as novelists"(1). He has published fourteen novels and more than two hundred stories. His career as a novelist began with *Swami and Friends* (1935). This novel has created Narayan's fictional world which is widely famous and repeated in his every type of writing.

After his first novel, *Swami and Friends*, he moved ahead with *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), and *The Dark Room* (1938). Then, the world war II interrupted him from writing novels but the end of the war was fertile for his novel writing, initiated with *The English Teacher* (1945), which was followed by *Mr. Sampath* (1949), *The Financial Expert* (1952), and *Waiting for Mahatma* (1955), *The Guide* (1958), *The Man Eater of Malgudi* (1962), *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967), *The Painter of Signs*

(1976), *A Tiger for Malgudi* (1983), *Talkative Man* (1986), and *The World of Nagraj* (1990) etc. are his major fictional works.

Apart from novels, R.N. Narayan has written short stories, memoirs, essays and travelogues. *A Horse and two Goats* (1970), *Malgudi Days* (1982), *An Astrologer's Day*, *Grandmother's Tale* and *Under the Banyan Tree* etc. are the collections of his famous short stories. Similarly, *My Dateless Diary* and *The Emerald's Journey* are his travel books. His collections of essays are: *Next Sunday*, *Reluctant Guru*, *A Writer's Nightmare*, *A Story tellers World* and *Salt Sawdust*. Also, he revived the classic Indian epic like the *Ramayana* (1972) and the *Mahabharata* (1978) condensing the length of the works and setting in modern surroundings.

Narayan won numerous awards during the course of his literary career. He got first major award in 1958, the *Sahitya Akademi*, award for *The Guide*. Six years later, he received the *Padma Bhushan* during the Republic Day honours of 1964. In 1980, he was awarded with *AC Benson Medal* by the (British) Royal Society of Literature, of which he was an honorary member. In 1982, he was elected as an honorary member of the *American Academy of Arts and Letters*. He was nominated for the *Nobel Prize* in Literature multiple times, but never won the honour. His literary recognition also came in the form of honorary doctorates by *the University of Leeds*, *the University of Mysore* and *Delhi University*. Towards the end of his career, Narayan was nominated in *Upper House of the Indian Parliament* for a six-year term starting in 1989, for his contributions in Indian literature. A year before his death, in 2000, he was awarded India's second-highest civilian honour, the *Padma Vibhushan*.

1. 2. R. K. Narayan as a Writer

R.K Narayan's writing style is simple and unpretentious with a natural element of humour. It focuses on ordinary people, reminding the reader of next-door neighbours, cousins and the like, thereby providing a greater ability of relating to the topics. Unlike his national contemporaries, he is able to write about the intricacies of Indian society without modifying its characteristics to establish local trend and fashion in fiction writing. He also employed the use of nuanced dialogic prose with gentle Tamil overtones based on the nature of his characters. Critics have considered Narayan to be the *Indian Chekhov*, due to the similarities in their writings, the simplicity and the gentle beauty and humour in tragic situations. Graham Greene in his *The Bachelor of Arts* considers Narayan resembles Chekhov than any Indian writer. Anthony West, columnist of *The New Yorker*, considers Narayan's writings to be grounded in realism. He portrays social realism in his writing but not photographic reality; he rather represents reality, which is artistic. In this sense, he differs from the French realists and naturalists who were interested in the naked realism of life. M.K. Bhatnagar writes "Narayan depicts a kind of realism which is something more than reportage"(24). Similarly another critic, William Walsh observes "... the religious sense of Indian myth is part of Narayan's grip of reality"(98).

Narayan blends his theme and style. He uses simple diction that mirrors the daily life of the middle class people of Malgudi. The Malgudi of his novels in Indian is microcosm. Like Hardy's Wessex and William Faulkner's Yoknapatawa, Malgudi is a recurrent locale of his novels. It is the symbol of Indian reality. What happens in Malgudi is in fact happened in the Indians in general. Most of his novels are set in the imaginary town Malgudi reflecting the typical Indian way of living which is coloured with the touch of culture and modernity in most of his novels.

Critics have noted that Narayan's writings tend to be more descriptive and less analytical; the objective style, rooted in a detached spirit, providing for a more authentic and realistic narration. His attitude, coupled with his perception of life, provided a unique ability to fuse characters and actions, and an ability to use ordinary events to create a connection in the mind of readers. A significant contributor to his writing style is his creation of Malgudi, a stereotypical small town, where the standard norms of superstition and tradition apply. Narayan's writing style is often compared to that of William Faulkner since both their works brought out the humour and energy of ordinary life while deploying compassionate humanism.

N.N. Sharan puts forward his view regarding the style and technique of novel *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*, like “Here we meet [a] different Narayan who not only asks fundamental questions about good and evil but also furnishes his own answer to them. While applying the techniques, he underlines his narrative techniques on an ancient Hindu myth”(228). In this way, Sharan detects the novel perfectly based on Hindu myth of Bhasmasura. Even if he studied Western culture, he is deeply attached with his Hindu religion and tradition which are clearly visualized in his writings.

Shashi Tharoor expresses his view similar to Sharan. He says, “Narayan follows the familiar pattern that we take from the *Puranas* where a demon gets too powerful, threatens the heaven with his elemental forces but finally goes up in the air like a bubble in the sea leaving the universes as calm as before” (380).

Narayan basically focuses on religious and cultural themes like renunciation, incarnation; re-birth ‘ahimsa’ and the law of ‘Karma’, female issues, marriage and so on. Irony, humour and myth are also some components for picturing the ageless rich heritage of Indian culture and tradition. He has projected his world of values juxtaposing cultural and conflict in its different aspects. In that respect, he also mixes

certain spiritual and secular ideas with which Indians are normally familiar. William Walsh observes, “The religious sense of Indian myth is part of Narayan’s grip of reality and his particular view of human life and his individual way of placing and ordering human experience” (14).

He handles English language skilfully. His English language is simple and clear. For him English is an absolutely ‘Swedeshi language.’ He uses ‘Bharat’ brand of English which should reflect the prevailing Indian conditions. Due to the fusion of humour and irony, his techniques become impressive. Meenakshi Mukherjee in her seminal book *The Twice Born Fiction* writes:

His ironic dimension is an integral part of his comic vision. He explores the tremendous possibilities of the comic in the common place world of Malgudi. He is essentially a comic ironist who has taken a keen interest in Indian life in and around Malgudi. His humorous portrayal of outer and inner conflicts of man with touches of pathos and irony demonstrates his insight into the human reality (5).

Furthermore, Hariprasanna comments on Narayan’s techniques and styles as, “He is an enchanter; it is beautifully written, funny and haunting evoking in marvellously rich detail the atmosphere of a small town in southern Indian and creating a magical world into which the reader is instantly drawn”(188). He praises Narayan’s craftsmanship and finds him as an enchanter who meticulously observes the atmosphere of small town in southern India Malgudi with very funny and haunting story.

Narayan basically focuses upon Hindu myth in his writings that is blended with some of the modern characteristics in most of his novels and short stories. He exploits some traditional characters intact with their own culture and often remains

stoic. And there are some other characters greatly influenced by modern the Western culture. Due to the two modes of life, there are conflicts in his novels which is also evident in *The Dark Room*. Savitri, the female protagonist of the novel, is a symbol of traditional Indian womanhood. She is deeply devoted to Ramani, her husband. She thinks her husband as God, but on the other hand her husband wants to be free from traditional religious life style. He rarely pays his attention to his wife and children. Similarly, the same quality can be seen in his next novel *The English Teacher*. In the novel, Susila is living a traditional life, but her husband Krishna is influenced with Western way of life.

In the novel, *The Dark Room*, Narayan has portrayed an imaginary place Malgudi to posit the transition in Indian culture. Crux of the novel is to show the effect of colonization upon Indian culture and discordance in among the Indian people by Westernization. The novel revolves around the main characters Ramani, the husband, and his wife Savitri. Ramani, an officer in Englandia Insurance Company, wants to live a carefree life without being solely responsible for his wife and children. He tries to imitate the English officials' life style and exhorts his wife not to act in traditional manner. He complains his wife for the foods she prepares and also for the decoration of the room. Neither has he liked his wife's accent, gesture and other traditional behaviours. As an officer he tries to maintain his overbearing charismatic personality and wants it be applied in his house too. He is influenced by the culture practised in his office and encourages his children to watch the modern sports like cricket and football than to pay attention to their mother's courtesy, anecdotes and to be involved in the tittle-tattle.

Ramani's office *Englandia Insurance Company* has inspired him to cope with Western cultural values and norms. As he delves deeply in his job he becomes much

more affected by the personality of his office staffs who are eloquent and having distinct behaviours. Gradually his inclination towards his wife and children diminishes and he neglects them because they are unsociable for him. Contrary to it, his wife grows to be a devotee of her husband showing faith, devotion and compassion which are the common characteristics of Hindu women. Savitri looks not only after her husband and children, but also whole household activities, which turns into a mess without her presence. Everywhere she presents herself as an obedient, loyal, responsible and hence a traditional Hindu woman. The more Savitri tries to be close to her husband the more Ramani finds her a conservative woman and the marital discord reaches into climax as Savitri ultimately decides to leave the home.

Ramani keeps himself busy in his work all day and night. He believes that it is not good to let the space for emotions and feelings. Whenever his children see him they are scared of him but they have propinquity with their mother, for she pays adequate attention to them. Ramani's influence of the Western culture does not allow the emotions and feelings to be bloomed but always focuses on profits, benefits and reasons that are represented by Ramani whereas Savitri, a traditional Hindu woman cultivates emotional qualities like love, affection, devotion, etc. in her.

Ramani is a stubborn fellow, he does not tolerate any advice from anyone when he passes his matriculation, his father advises him to continue his further study, but Ramani comes out with a bitter reply, "I know better what I must do"(116). He often feels that his wife has no right to object his friendship with Shanta Bai, his office staff. He frequently comes home with his friends without notifying his wife that brings difficulty to Savitri to serve the guests properly. But, Ramani is oblivion towards Savitri's plight. Here Narayan comments on Ramani "He just picked up a friend at the club and brought him home for dinner. It made him furious if it was

suggested that he should give notice: we are not so down -and-out yet as not to afford some extra food without having to issue warnings beforehand"(10). He seems very much hypocritical in the sense that he does not want his guests be known about the lack of foods in his house. He is indifferent to his family, nor does he want them to know anything concerning his office. He does not try to listen to the advice of his wife, he is unaware of his children's health, education etc. He recommends appointing a docile person in his office who can be easily handled. Here, we can see individualism in him because everywhere he performs his tasks in his own decision.

Ramani wants to go to cinema with his wife leaving the children behind. He says, "The children can go some other day. Not a fly extra now"(20). But Savitri desires to go with them. As Savitri hears her husband's desire of leaving children at home she unhappily says "Oh"(20). She knows it will be useless to plead. Ramani only focuses on the individual desire. He wants to be isolated even from his children. He enjoys his life in his own way neglecting everyone in the family. It is explicit that he does not pay any attention towards the emotion and feelings of his children, rather he emphasizes on his freedom and thus he seems irresponsible.

Savitri is not in the habit of taking meal before her husband. Ramani correctly remarks, "What a dutiful wife! Would rather starve than precedes her husband. You are really like some of the women in our ancient books"(101). It can easily be understood by the words of Ramani that Savitri is conscious about the culture in which every Hindu woman is bounded in respect to her husband. Ramani always gets entertained with modern achievements like car, films, electricity avoiding traditional and cultural activities. His life has been dramatically changed due to these scientific products. He always gets expedition in his car and is familiar with the outer modern world. On the contrary, his wife is confined within the four walls of the house; she

hardly gets time for outing with her husband. She spends her time in the traditional way. Here, we can see the total disparity between the husband and wife in which husband has become representative of Western and wife representing the traditional Hindu culture. Because of these two different poles they are always in conflict.

Shanta Bai, recruited by Ramani as part of his company, brings a serious tension in the scenario. Gangu reports to Savitri about the nexus between Ramani and Shanta Bai as, "Don't think I am gossiping, but there was [a girl] with him; perhaps it is that person about whom people are talking all this nonsense. I didn't want to tell you but I thought you might as well know, because what harm is there?"(98). She starts suspecting Ramani and her suspicions are soon proved right when she discerns extra-marital relationship between them. Tired of being ignored by a careless husband, she decides to leave the home. She can't bear her husband's behaviour and says, "Do you think that I will stay in your house, breathe the air of your property, drink the water here, and eat food you buy with your money? No, I'll starve and die in open, under the sky, a roof for which we need be obliged to no man"(87-88).

Even if she leaves her home, she immediately realizes that it is a sin to leave her husband and children. Rather she decides to end her life and jumps in Sarayu River, however, she is saved by Mari, a part time thief but a blacksmith by profession. He takes her to his home where she is well looked after by his wife, Ponni. Deeply influenced by the traditional concept of untouchability, higher caste Savitri denies taking any sort of food offered by the blacksmiths, Mari and Ponni. When Savitri denies taking anything from them, Ponni rightly comments, "I see you are a Brahmin and won't stay and eat with us. I will ask someone of your own caste to receive you"(106).

Savitri gets job in a local temple for a meagre earning, she finally believes that she has the strength to live all by herself and make sense of her life. But she is soon overcome by her desire for her children. She says, "I must see them; I must see Babu, I must see Sumati, and I must see Kamala. Oh"(142). She ultimately decides to return home. Because of her submissive traditional quality, she relegates her own ego and surrenders to the Hindu religion and culture and also to her husband. Unaffected by his wife' departure, Ramani thinks that he is free and never surrenders in front of the culture and convention of Hinduism.

1. 3. Critics on *The Dark Room*

Many critics have thrown light in their own manner on R.K. Narayan in general and *The Dark Room* in particular. One of the critics Graham Greene observes a strange mixture of humour, sadness and beauty in his novel. Greene comments Narayan as, "complete objectivity, complete freedom from comments" (52).

Narayan is a conscious literary artist whose novelistic form is beautifully determined by the dramatic need and nature of his materials. Prof. K.R.S. Iyenger rightly remarks, "He is one of the few writers in India who seek their craft seriously, constantly striving to improve the instrument, pursuing with a sense of dedication what may often seem to be the mirage of technical perfection" (32).

Narayan has enjoyed international fame for his literary contribution. He is greatly admired by different writers. Graham Greene regards Narayan as, "Since the death of Evelyn Waugh, Narayan is the novelist I most admire in the English language"(22). Not only this much, he has received many popular awards in his life.

Narayan was a man with sharp and minute observation. His observation has been reflected in his description of character and milieu. He was a very simple and gentle. He is religious by nature. He has given vivid ideas of south Indian life style in

most of his novels. His presentation of life is realistic. As William Walsh observes, ". . . the religious sense of Indian myth is part of Narayan's grip of reality and his particular view of human life and his individual way of placing and ordering human existence" (14).

In most of his novels through the use of imaginary town Malgudi, he attempts to represent patriarchal society that could not really accept female as an Agent in India. Narayan's novel *The Dark Room* epitomizes the patriarchal mechanism of the Indian Society. According to S. Krishna, "Narayan's third novel, *The Dark Room* is the story of a woman, who is neglected by her husband, decides unsuccessfully to run away from home" (xi).

Some other critics are very much interested with R.K Narayan's imaginary town, Malgudi where most of his novels are set. It remains a dream country in which physical features of various places are fused in a single detail. Nagendra Nath Sharan understands it as:

The physical geography of Malgudi is never dealt with as a set piece but allows revealing itself beneath and between the events; one comes to have a strong feeling for the place's identity. The detail suggests surely and economically, the special flavour of Malgudi, a blend of oriented and pre-1914 British, like an Edwardian mixture of sweet mangoes and malt vinegar (68).

Sharan further stressed the universal quality of Malgudi, "Whatever happens in India happens in Malgudi and whatever happens in Malgudi happens everywhere" (24). Narayan is compared with Thomas Hardy and William Faulkner who also created imaginative setting like "Wessex" and "Yoknapatawpha" respectively.

Narayan has beautifully created his imaginary town of Malgudi in which the action of his novels takes place. S.Krishna says:

One of the important characteristics of the novel is that it gives its personages, a local habitation and a name. Narayan follows the line of Hardy and achieves his localization. Faulkner is another brilliant name in America who has an excellent mastery of place in fiction. So, is the case with Narayan in India? Faulkner's fictional place is Yoknapatawpa; Narayan's fictional setting is Malgudi (27).

Narayan's novels are flexible enough to be used in a variety of ways. His fictional work ranges from tragedy to tragic-comedies to pure comedy. His fictions explore idea, and ideologies, that is simply a mirror of life drifting into fantasy and presents a slice of life or to some extent romantic image. Narayan's fictions are domestic comedies rather than tragedies. According to Sisir Kumar Das, "Narayan's fictional world is world of comedy that springs from community with markedly traditional mores standards of behaviours and beliefs" (71).

Narayan is primarily an artist with comic version. He has delighted his countless readers with simple language and ironic comment. Shashi Tharoor, an Indian critic, praises Narayan's craftsmanship in this way, "R.K. Narayan is a master of story teller whose language is simple and unpretentious, whose wit is critical yet healing, and whose characters are drawn with sharp precision and subtle irony"(24).

Before reading Narayan's third novel *The Dark Room*, some critics find it an insignificant novel. One of such critics is A.N. Kaul who observes it, "The point is that, like Mahatma, *The Dark Room* happens to be a weak and insignificant novel, and it is obvious that Ibsenism or the feminist idea can inspire. Narayan's imagination is as little as the political idea of Gandhism."(Sharan 73). But this novel cannot be

read only from the perspective of Ibsenism or feministic view. We can study this book using the glass of modernity.

R. K. Narayan is the foremost Indo-English novelist of today. He is essentially ironic in his vision of life. His stories and novels as Bhatnagar believes "reflect his awareness about the fundamental disharmonies and absurdities which life and world are constantly providing us. He accepts the reality of life ungrudgingly taking things as they come to him"(99). Nowhere has he seemed to be writing with an idea in his mind to rectify the situation or the word. In fact this type of realization and attitude helped him form a balanced view of life and situations. He wrote nearly for fifty years. Actually, it is the proper use of the eye, the mind and the heart behind all his writings which reflect the excellence of his craftsmanship throughout.

Therefore, the earlier researchers haven't talked about the novel from the perspective of cultural conflict, a hot issue of today, which enables the researcher to work on the field.

2. Theoretical Modality

2.1 Indian culture

While delving deep into the ancient Indian society, we find it was multi-religious and multi-linguistic in nature. We can easily understand this from Sanskrit and Tamil literature. Writers described not only their people and landscape, but also showed a wide interest in the natural surroundings, and the people of another land. Thus in '*Ramayana*' there is the description of hill people, the forest dwellers and heaven, the world of God. The writing reflected the traditional Indian belief in God. Furthermore, the writings of ancient India also reflected political and literal unity-in-diversity and diversity-in –unity of Indian culture and society.

Traditional Indian society is in the bound of peasant-landlord relationship; it observed the caste system placing Brahmans and Chhetri at the upper level and Baishya and Shudra at the lower place of social hierarchy. This hierarchy was mainly based on occupation and birth. Charles Van Doren comments, "One is not only born a Shudra; one also becomes a Shudra by the occupation one follows, which Shudra alone must follow and which only Shudra may follow"(7). There were certain occupations that upper-class people simply did not follow. Similarly, different classes also used to eat different foods differently and had different customs in family life. The ancient cultures of the Indian subcontinent might have been the first to discover the powerful means of maintaining social order. Doren believes, "Class differentiation is the great foe of the equally great idea of social equality" (7).

Traditional Indian social economy was based on agriculture that provided food for large population. They had dug ditches and canals to irrigate their farms. Due to the lack of modern system of agriculture there was the mass poverty in India. Torlok Singh closely observes and says, "Mass poverty in India is basically and to an

overwhelming degree, a rural problem. It is implicit in the present structure and economic basis of our rural society. If we are to abolish poverty, we must rebuild our social and economic foundations" (1).

Indian people had a custom to marry their daughters before puberty, and parents who did not succeed in finding husbands for their daughters past the age of puberty, were regarded as guilty of a great sin. According to M. N. Srinivas, "Brahmin marriage is in theory, indissoluble, and a Brahmin widow, even if she be a child widow, is required to have her head shaved, and to shed all jewellery, and ostentation in clothes."(Aiyappan and Ratnam 78). She was regarded as inauspicious. Sex life was denied to her. Among Hindus generally there was a preference for virginity in brides, chastity in wives.

The institutions of the low castes were more liberal in the spheres of marriage and sex than those of the Brahmins. In the case of the low caste marriage and sex Srinivas comments, "Post puberty marriages do occur among them, widows do not have to shave their heads, and divorce and widow marriage are both permitted and practiced"(Aiyappan and Ratnam 78). Generally their sex code was not as harsh as among Brahmins.

Brahmin women used to perform a number of religious vows, the aim of some of which were longing for long life of their husbands. A woman's hope used to predecease her husband, and thus avoid becoming a widow. As Srinivas comments, "Women who predecease their husbands are considered both lucky as well as good, while widowhood is attributed to sins committed in a previous incarnation" (Aiyappan and Ratnam 79).

A wife who used to show devotion to her husband was held up as an ideal, as a *Pativrata*, that is, one who regarded the devoted service of her husband as her

greatest duty. Hence, the women in India tried to maintain the cultural embodiment destined to them. They used to opine that it was their fate and feat to serve their husbands. There are many myths describing the devotion and loyalty of some sainted women to their husbands. Furthermore, Indian society was deeply rooted on the religion and culture it practised. They believed on God, worshipping God was like daily activities which became a part of Indian culture. In such system women were taught to worship their husbands as an image of God. They used to celebrate different festivals which themselves were based on such cultural practices.

When the Indian society was religious, patriarchal, agro-based social structure, discrimination in terms of caste, deeply affected by poverty, then the writing of that period reflected such issues. The writers mainly posited the emergency of preserving the cultural milieu India had practised in the then society. In this way Indian culture came at the heart of text in a contextualized form. The writers reflected such cultural importance in their writings.

When India was colonized by Britain, the Indian culture was slowly and gradually affected by the Western culture. Due to the overbearing tutelage of the colonizers the colonized Indian learnt to practice the cultural life of Western people. The colonizers even tried to inferiorize the native people and their culture, religion, language and other milieu. The colonizers argued themselves to be the source of civilization and advocated their urgency to rescue the natives from the dark cave of ignorance. They disseminated that it was their burden to educate the natives. It was the way of justifying their colonial rule in India. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in their *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* argue about the colonizers' aim of extending their geographical demarcation:

From the early days of colonization [...] not only text in general, but also literature, broadly defined, underpinned efforts to interpret other lands, offering home audience a way of thinking about exploration, Western conquest, national valour, new colonial acquisition.

Travellers, traders, administer settlers, 'read' the strange and new by drawing on familiar books such as the bible or *Progress Pilgrim's* (19).

They invaded the native culture and employed their cultural practices in India. When Indian culture was dismantled, the Indian religion was mocked. During this period, Indian ethos gradually underwent a sea change from the stock response of defeat and frustration and the trauma of inferior feeling to a new found self awareness and self-confidence. Indian society started to learn Western culture and its experiences, and Indian people experience the Western form of life through imitation.

The colonizers' textuality defines itself as a rational being by representing the characterization of colonized Indian people as secondary, abject, weak and feminine. The discourse can be taken to refer to that collection of symbolic practices, including textual codes and conventions and implied meanings, which British colonizers deployed in the process of colonial expansion and , in particular in understanding the bizarre and apparently unintelligible strangeness with which it came into contact. Its interpretations were an expression of its mastery which mobilized its authority through certain symbols. Race, classification, therefore, could be used to explain not only biological variety but the superiority of colonizers and inferiority of colonized in different cultural types. Boehmer in his *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature* further explains:

Depending on the context, this opposite took the form of women or slave, servant or beast, and with the onset of colonization, as became the colonized a category of representation which subsumed within itself those other significance of difference. The feminized colonial other allowed the European the more intensively to realize himself and in certain conditions herself also (81).

Indian colonized society was invaded by the multitudinous riches of Britishers especially, English literature and culture. People started to think that to be Westernized in the language and culture is to command more and more prestige. In short, Indian social life and its literature during colonial period was nothing but mere imitation of their colonial master, their literature and society. Indian society had been blinded by the glare of Western civilization. So they took it as something good and prestigious and started to follow it.

2. 2 Western Influence on Indian Culture

So far as the concern of the emergence of Western influence in India, we should take into account of colonization which succeeded its mission through the scientific and technological development. As a result Westernization became the transcendence of modernization. Modernity in India came to have been recognized as synonymous to Westernization. The emphasis on English education in India also played a vital role in changing Indian society and people towards Westernization and modernization. However, modernity should not be identified with formal and generic innovation but has to be related with a shift in experience, a change in the relation between the past and the present. Modernity is the consciousness of new age, new sensibility, and sense of the new attitude towards the past as well as future with experiences of life.

Cricket is another symbol of modern Indian society. Today, the extraordinary popularity of cricket in India is clearly tied up with national sentiments. Modern Indian people are almost crazy with the game. But in the early history of the game in India, cricket fostered two other kinds of loyalty. The first was religious identities. The second, rather more abstractly instantiated in the sport, was loyalty to empire. Hindus, Parsis, Muslims, the Europeans, and eventually the rest were organized into cricket ethnic groupings, some of which included antagonists in which players as well as crowds learned to think of themselves as Hindu, Muslim and Parsis in contrast with the Europeans.

For the colonized cricket became a matter of dignity. They tried to equalize themselves with the colonizers by competing in the field of it which colonizer used to think as a modern game and only in their access. Such psychology of colonizer could not remain indifferent with such matters of dignity. They used to think that playing and watching cricket is to become modern. So they are obsessed with it.

Westernization was also a technological advancement which contributed to the development of electricity, transportation, and communication in India that made life of Indian people more advance. By the influence of Western culture the Indian people got split in different forms, the relationship between the husband and wife, tradition and modernity, cities and the villages, print culture and oral culture are directly affected. All these changes were inevitable results of technological advancement and intervention in the production of literature and also the changes in the social fabric that a new education and new administrative system has brought about.

The two centuries of British rule has created tension in the psyche of Indian elite: it wants to assert its own distinctiveness and at the same time, is attracted by the

power of India. All its side of progress and all its concepts and institutions is borrowed by India. The modernity in literature both as an experience and project comes out of the continuous tensions, rather than the synthesis between these two worlds more as less identified as opposites. Not only the models of literary genre are borrowed from European literature but also the debates relating to social authority and individual freedom are the realms of private and public, myth and history also characterize the colonial Indian culture. As Gayatri Spivak asserts:

The Indian anxiety for the West and its dilemma of the modernity has created an unresolved tension in Indian social life . . . traditional Indian life world and emerging modern literature. The urge of imitation has often overcome Indian writers and the search for modernity has been elusive. In India, society and its literature emerged as an assimilation of the nature of imperial regime. The issue of sex and morality became quite controversial and even the icon of modernity among certain groups of Indian writing (13).

The Indian writers realized that eroticism was different from the frank portrayal of sex, the former aims at evoking certain emotive effects; the latter is part of exploration of relationship between Individual and society. The sexual relationship was related to change in experience, but it had created tension between the social authority and individual freedom. In literature, sex assumed a place of importance not because there was any radical change in social relationship but certainly there was any radical change in artistic consciousness. The treatment of sex became the indicator of modernity, and changing perceptions of man women relationship. In modern time, Indian society has become more transparent in sexual matters.

The change in culture emerged from Indian society's changing attitude towards West, its transformation from agricultural state to semi-Industrial state, establishment of financial institutions and banking and society. As Appadurai says:

The experience of modernity is local, but locality itself has undergone a fundamental set of changes over the past five hundred years. We are in the process of witnessing a fundamental transformation in the very nature of world systems and global process. Various forms of global interactions have always been with us, and so have various forms of world systems. Even before maritime, expansion of the West in the sixteenth century complex global formation did exist, but we are only now beginning to theorize the shift from these early global process to those that constitute global process today (14).

The Dark Room by R. K. Narayan revolves around the issue of cultural conflict. Since the novel was written around 1930, and the Indian society was in the transitional period of cultural change and decolonization, the novel depicts the dynamics of the Indian society.

The novel centres on the tension between the male and female, represented by Ramani and Savitri, respectively. Ramani, being fascinated with the Western life style, enjoys liaison, modern movies, parties etc. On the other hand, Savitri's faith on religion, her blind fidelity and the role of daughter-in-law shows her inclination to the Indian culture. In addition, Babu's craze for cricket, electricity, movies, and adoption of Western system of education further highlight the influence of Westernization. On the contrary, Gangu's and Ponni inclination to the traditional norms and values show that females are still traditional unlike males. Hence, I will explore cultural change as a theoretical tool to analyze the text and justify the issue of cultural conflict.

To be westernized is the condition of being new and innovative which has generally been opposition to tradition in contemporary analyses of social and political change. It is the consciousness of time and space, and self and others that is shared by the Indian people. Westernization can be realized when the original Indian tradition has been destroyed and superseded. It is a radical threat to all history and tradition.

To understand cultural change clearly, we must understand the contact of a society with another. Culture implies the social activities that are practiced for long. They are based on certain conventions and customs which contain different values in different society. Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary defines culture as "a belief, custom or way of doing something that has existed for a long time among a particular group of people." Generally it is based on religion and superstition that is more rigid and dogmatic.

But Westernization in India tried to demolish and replace all unnecessary superstitious social norms and values and encouraged all people to be more open and kept them away from the social practices related to Indian culture. It was the successful mission of the colonizers in India since they had scientific and industrial knowledge. In this way Indian culture gradually got twisted by the influence of Western culture. Such effect can be seen in different ways according to Marshall Berman:

The main stone of modern life has been felt from many sources: great discoveries in the physical sciences, changing our images of the universe and our place in it; the industrialization of production, which transforms scientific knowledge into technology, creates new human environments and destroys old ones, speeds up the whole tempo of life, generates new forms of corporate power and class struggle. . . (2).

The advancement of science and technology serves as the catalyst for the flourishing of the Western culture. Modern science, communication, philosophy, industrialization stimulated the progress of human life, particularly, human consciousness. More specifically, the Indian people were impressed at the advent of industrialization. In the contemporary India, media played a significant role for the dissemination of colonizers' scientific achievement and their production. Because of media, the colonizers were able to legitimize their rule in India. In every colony the Western people used to promulgate the essence of educating the aboriginal people. They used to opine about the urgency of educating the savage and barbaric natives, who had to follow the instruction given by their big brother. In the process of colonization the British people created a binary opposition between them and the Indian people. To maintain the colonizers' superior belongingness the discourse played vital role in analyzing and imposing stereotypes in Indian culture. Because of this the ruling class became successful in promoting its own interest in the Indian society. Edward Said in his book *Representation of Intellectual* writes:

The construction of the fiction like East and West to say nothing of racialist essence like subject races, oriental , Aryan, negroes and like, were what my book attempted to combat. Far from encouraging a sense of aggrieved primal innocence in countries which had suffered the ravages of colonialism, I stated repeatedly that mythical abstractions such as these were lies, as were the various rhetoric of blame they gave rise to; cultures are too intermingled, their contexts and histories too interdependent and hybrid, for surgical separation into large and mostly ideological oppositions like orient and occident (xi-xii).

It was the process of colonizers to invade the psychology of the colonized people who were gradually hypnotized to accept the culture, politics and behaviours of the colonizers. The psychological domination of culturally privileged is clearly seen in the concept of Said's *Orientalism*. Grounding upon the psychological concept or attitude the West clearly others the East and this same concept reveals in Orientalism. The East and Eastern people have been defined always in relation to what they are not, and therefore, they are demonized as 'others'. The West deliberately produces 'the other' in order to create its identity and then, consolidate colonial power over the 'other'. They become always conscious about their belongingness, which in turn bars them from promoting mutual bond with the 'other'. Unlike oriental, they believe 'we' are true human beings; so, 'we' have right to govern, to rule and even to possess 'them'. Their psychological attitude makes them believe that it is their human prerogative not only to manage the non-white but also to own it, to teach it and make it civilized. Said clearly shows the purposes served by Orientalism:

... to subordinate or underplay military power in order to aggrandize the project of glorious knowledge acquired in the process of political domination of the orient; to formulate the orient, to give it shape, identity, definition with full recognition of its place in memory, its importance to imperial strategy, and its "natural" role as an appendage to West; to dignify all the knowledge collected during colonial occupation with the title "contribution to modern learning" (43).

According to Said Orientalism is in fact a cultural and political aspect which has germinated by analysing and interpreting the orient. The discourse is manipulated by power which belongs to West. So the main aim of discourse is to represent the

Oriental culture, geography, religion and socio-economic milieu within a familiar framework of grammatical and symbolic structures they practised in colonial rule. The main purpose served by the discourse is the experimentation with lives, and above all with meaning of oriental geography, culture, religion and language.

The British textuality defined itself as a rational being by the representation and characterization of colonized Indian people as secondary human beings. One example of pragmatic text of Western representation about the superiority of their beings is Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). In this text Defoe represents Crusoe as an agent of Western civilization. The text represents Crusoe as superior human being who, after all, confirms his identity of being white and disciple of Christianity. Crusoe, like the archetypal colonialist, strives to assert his own reality and establishes right to govern the island. The act of renaming the cannibal Friday represents Crusoe as a father figure who has a responsibility to baptize the slave. It explains Crusoe's concerns to make of the cannibal survivor Friday, an image of himself, an opposite who will confirm the reality of his own being. Thus the West conceived of its superiority relative to the perceived lack of power, self consciousness, or ability to think and rule of colonized people. The act of Christianizing Friday is the image which shows Westerners as conquerors and civilizers of the world. In the similar way the British colonizers in India tried to justify righteousness of colonial rule to rescue the alien Indians from the dark cave. In the process of colonization the colonizers had great impact upon the religion, culture, behaviours, ethics and language of the colonized Indian people. They wanted to civilize the Indian people as it was desire of civilising the islanders by Robinson Crusoe. To some extent, the colonizers were able to impose their religious and cultural values upon the natives. In this regard there was dichotomy between the

natives affected by the Western culture and the natives who did not like the hegemony of Western culture over their traditional culture.

R. K. Narayan's *The Dark Room* also deals with the Indian people divided in themselves by colonization. Some Indians tried to imitate and follow the culture of colonizers and some were still faithful towards their primitive culture, a legacy of their forefathers. Ramani, a representative of Western thought and culture, does not like the narrow access of Indian culture. Neither has he liked to be bounded by cultural and religious values of his ancient lineage. Contrary to it, his wife Savitri does not like the interference of Western culture over Indian culture, a root of her origin and Hindu identity. So the researcher has tried to posit the cause of conflict between Ramani and Savitri because of their different cultural faith and inclination, influenced by the Western culture and desired to be embodied in the primitive Indian culture, respectively.

2. 3 Cultural Conflict in India

Cultural conflict is a hot issue in the postcolonial societies. In the colonial period there was the expansion of geographical demarcation and Western countries were able to disseminate their religion, culture, politics and economic policy. Even after the colonial countries were independent there was a crisis of autonomous government. There was not geographical colonization any longer but the psychological colonization was imprinted on the psychology of the natives. Following independence, however, the elites of the societies tried to distinguish themselves from the common people of their societies. The elite people behaved as if they were the English people to govern the rest of them. In a sense there was distance created between the elites and under privileged people in the postcolonial countries.

Influenced by the colonial rule, the elites thought that it was essential to imitate the characteristics nature of Western people to be modern. But the rest of people did not like any change in their culture. They thought that modernization does not necessarily mean Westernization. As a result there was clash between the natives embodying the Western culture and civilization with those who were optimistic and faithful towards their native culture and civilization. Samuel P. Huntington in *The Clash of Civilization* mentions that the causes of conflict in the post modern societies are not "...ideological, political, or economic. They are cultural"(21). He further writes:

In this new world the most pervasive, important and dangerous conflict will not be between social classes, rich and poor, or other economically defined groups, but between peoples belonging to different cultural entities. Tribal wars and ethnic conflicts will occur within civilizations. Violence between state and groups from different civilizations, however, carries with it the potential for escalation as other states and groups from this civilization rally to the support of their kin countries (28).

The split in Indian culture initiated from the colonial period in which the homogeneity of Indian culture was dismantled because there was English culture governing it. The colonial period brought every cultural practice of Westerners in effect because they were powerful scientifically, economically, militarily and rationally. After decolonization the Indian society became multi-generic in religious and cultural values. The vestiges of English culture could also be felt because the psychological colonization was still in practice in Indian people. As a result India turned to be multicultural place. The multicultural societies in India had different

cultural life styles. Hybridity of culture is not only the symptom of globalization it is an engendering element of fragment among the people celebrating different cultures. Huntington argues that the cause of conflict in the postcolonial societies would not be in the issues of power, nationalism and political doctrine but it will be by the difference of cultural values. He opines about the division of people as:

A significant correspondence exists between the divisions of people by cultural characteristics into civilizations as their division by physical characteristics into races. Yet civilization and race are not identical. People of the same race can be deeply divided by civilization; people of different races may be united by civilization. In particular, the great missionary religions, Christianity and Islam, encompass societies from varieties of races (42).

In this way the postcolonial societies of India are also affected by the fusion of the Western and the primitive native culture. The people influenced by the Western culture try to show their overbearing bossy personality which may not be accepted for the people who are faithful towards their primitive culture and tradition in which they are grown up. Thus, the researcher has tried to show the issue of cultural conflict in the contemporary Indian society by interpreting *The Dark Room* by R.K. Narayan.

3. Textual Analysis

3.1 Fusion of Western and Eastern Culture: An Analysis of *The Dark Room*

Any literary text has its concordance with the social realities where the writer is born and grown up. In a sense the writer tries to reflect the social structure, framework and custom in the form of writing. Such raw materials enable the writer to carry out the norms, mores and social ideologies in general and action and reaction of the people in particular. Michel Foucault has similarly insisted upon the historical background and productivity of a literary text. In this regard, R. K. Narayan's writings are the reflection of Indian society of the 1930s in which we can find two ways of life because India was then undergoing through the collision of the colonizers' and colonized two different cultures. Colonization had great impact upon Indian culture. Some natives, influenced by the culture of colonizers, tried to imitate them and some strongly opposed the Western culture to promote their own culture. In *The Dark Room* R.K. Narayan portrays a representative couple, Ramani and Savitri, who are in conflict and tension because Ramani has adopted the Western culture and acts accordingly with it which is in contradiction with his wife's devotion and inclination towards Hindu culture. Thus, the conflict between Ramani and Savitri deepens as they embody two different cultures.

In all of Narayan's novels, Indian culture is reflected in various ways. He wrote many novels and short stories addressing humanity as a central theme. He had started writing under the influence of events occurring around him. His main concern is on the small segments of the Indian middle-class society and its mores and traditions as well as influence of Western way of life. The theme that has mostly been projected in his novel is the juxtaposition of traditional life of India and the effect of Westernization on it. Though he writes in English, his attitude towards the Western

world is bitter. Especially, he criticizes the ex-colonizers who invaded the local culture and tradition of India. So, we can find the confrontation between the orient and the occident in most of his novels. It means there is tension between Indian culture and Western forms of life.

To show the traditional and Western forms of life within single society, he creates imaginary setting of Malgudi which one or other way depicts the Indian tradition. In fact, Malgudi is an Indian small town that stands at a nicely calculated comic distance between the East and West or traditional and modern. We see a lucid reason behind Narayan's choice of the small-town. The superficial influence of Western or modern forces on it does not destroy its basic characters. It still retains and displays a more humane way of life. Narayan himself describes Malgudi in *The Dark Room*:

Malgudi in 1935 suddenly came into line with the modern age by building a well equipped theatre-the palace Talkies-which simply brushed aside the old corrugated-sheet-roofed Variety Hall, which from time immemorial had entertained the citizens of Malgudi with tattered silent films (22).

It means Malgudi was a cultural place of India but slowly and gradually it is being influenced by Western culture. Here, People are enjoying with film along with other scientific products. The people have imitated the Western culture and are generating the Western modes of life. While doing so the Indian people have forgotten the cultural root of their predecessors.

The Dark Room depicts two polar modes of Indian society, the traditional and the modern, which are represented by female characters like Savitri, Sumati, Kamala, Ponni, Gangu and male characters like Ramani, Babu, Mari etc. respectively. They

come from different worlds with disparate outlook that poses a continuous conflict between and among them. They symbolize a contrast between two worlds-one Indian and other Western.

Savitri, a devoted wife of Ramani and a good mother of their three children- Babu, Sumati and Kamala, represents traditional Indian society. She is loudly and deeply devoted to her husband and children. She goes on a futile quest to maintain good relationship with her husband whereas her husband, Ramani being influenced by the culture of the colonizers, does not like to confine within the social responsibility prescribed to him by Hindu culture. Thus, he transcends the social rules and regulation and establishes extramarital relationship with Shanta Bai, one of his staff in his office Engladia Insurance Company. These two worlds represented by Savitri and Ramani are totally different from each other.

The traditional world represented by Savitri always seeks to maintain social system that is status-quo at the backdrop of social, cultural and religious rules and regulations while the world represented by Ramani always seeks to subvert such traditional world under the influence of Western culture. These two incompatible worlds, in the novel, always create conflict.

In the novel Savitri plays the role of iconic wife and mother as assigned by the Hindu culture and tradition. She is presented in such a way that she can't revolt against her irresponsible husband because the society schooled her to be submissive, dutiful, faithful worshipper, devotee towards her husband and children. Not only this, she is depicted as an honest wife, who does not resist her husband even against the blunder committed by him. She serves him as a true devotee. She even after knowing the true nature of Ramani, does not hate him rather wants to manipulate him in her favour being honest and submissive.

Savitri is an ideal wife and mother without any selfish motives. She follows the mainstream patriarchal norms and value of Hindu culture. In Hindu culture and tradition, the wife never takes her food before her husband does. Savitri is a typical Hindu wife in this regard. Her husband Ramani correctly remarks, "What a dutiful wife! Would rather starve than precede her husband. You are really like some of the women in our ancient book"(11). Her very name is mythical. In the Hindu myth Savitri is the devoted wife of Satyavan who follows Yama and succeeds in getting back the life of her husband. In the novel, the heroine Savitri has some of the precious traits of the mythical Savitri.

Ramani cannot understand his wife properly so fails to make his family happy. He, an essentialist, strives to dismantle Savitri's ideology by establishing extramarital relationship with Shanta Bai, his office staff. He can't limit himself to Savitri anymore and taunts her time and again. He treats her as a doll or means of fulfilling his physical desires while Savitri takes him as an ideal husband. Thus, the tension between them mounts high as the novel moves ahead.

Ramani has illicit relation with Shanta Bai, a major cause of conflict, who comes between Ramani and Savitri and loots Savitri's happiness. It means, Shanta Bai, etymologically *Santa* means peace, is responsible for all 'Ashanti' [discord] in Savitri's life. She even fails to understand another female's plight. She freely enjoys with Savitri's husband Ramani, who does not take any responsibility of his family. Savitri, however, wants to maintain a good family relationship and attempts to keep her family harmonious and peaceful, but in vain.

Savitri believes in religion, superstition, manners, social norms and values and ideal family and also desires these qualities within her husband. But in contrast, Ramani enjoys his life in his own way by neglecting his other members of the family.

He has odd relationship with cute and somehow modern girl, Shanta Bai. They enjoy watching film even in the night. Slowly they forget their family in particular and ignore the whole society in general. In one sense, Ramani is guided by Dionysian qualities of merrymaking and enjoying, which are the ingredients of Western culture, whereas Savitri is guided by sensibility, tolerance and submission of a 'pativrata' lady like 'Sita'.

Savitri, on the other hand, is ritualistic who always attempts to win her husband's heart when she comes to know that he runs after another woman, and tries her best to bring him back. She beautifies herself with new clothes, and make up with cosmetics and "sees her in the mirror in the evening"(81). She hopes her husband comes back from Shanta Bai. But all her attempts go in vain when Ramani does not come at that night. When she sees nothing in her favour, she leaves her house, husband and children. This is in one sense a challenge to the male hypocritical society. This event gives no solace to Ramani. He is tortured when his children frequently ask about their mother. "All right, father. But I have come to talk about Mother. What about her?"(155) asks Babu. He becomes more shattered when Babu asks, "Is she alive?"(155). Saying this Babu bursts into tears. In this context, Narayan rightly comments, "Ramani was slightly frightened. He himself had not been quite easy in mind since the morning"(155) because Savitri has left the house. Her escape is a kind of threat to male hypocritical social structure. This is a kind of tension that is bound to resolve in one or other way.

Savitri does not have any intention to divorce as Western people do, but she challenges just to change her husband's individual behaviour so that he can give more time to his family. Divorce is against Hindu religion so she never thinks of this; rather she returns her house after some days with more love and affection towards her

family members as traditional women do. It is obvious that Savitri attempts to live a free, independent life forsaking the house not because she intends to shatter Ramani and children's life but because to protect him from being ruined due to his lustful and mechanical relationship. Hence, leaving home and entering into the dark room, for Savitri, are defensive strategies to get her husband back to her.

Savitri tries her best to correct the ways of her husband but her efforts are proved futile at the end. Hence, one day she revolts and leaves the house in huff. At this place she reminds us of Nora Helmer in Ibsen's famous play *The Doll's House*. When her friend Gangu sees Ramani and Shanta Bai sitting together in the Tamil Picture Hall, she informs all the events to her intimate friend, Savitri. She gets shattered when she detects the information about her husband's infidelity. It is Hindu culture that never excuses extramarital affair. Since Savitri is the product of the same Hindu culture she cannot bear it anymore and challenges her husband, "Don't touch me! You are dirty, you are impure. Even if I burn my skin, I can't [clean] myself of the impurity of your touch"(102). Here, her intention is not to lose her husband but to make him correct and responsible towards the family.

Hindu women are honest to their husbands and expect the same from their spouses. They easily forgive their husbands' minor mistakes but cannot bear when their husbands wander hither and thither with other women. Traditional Hindu women live under the guardianship of their husbands. They rarely go outside even for the job. They totally depend on their husbands which make them subservient to males. But when they find male out of the boundary of Hindu custom, they are not ready to accept such immoralities. In the novel, Savitri is the representative of Hindu women but Ramani abuses Savitri's loyalty. So Savitri challenges him and says, "Do you think that I will stay in your house, breathe the air of your property, drink the

water here, and eat food you buy with your money? No, I'll starve and die in the open, under the sky, a roof for which we need be obliged to no man" (87-88).

Savitri severely challenges her hypocritical husband Ramani who either one or other way is influenced by Western form of life. When she cannot correct his immoral character, she leaves her house, husband along with her children-Babu, Sumati and Kamala. She thinks of committing suicide rather than divorce which, for her, is against Hindu tradition and religion. Later neither she is able to die nor able to escape from Hindu culture. It means she returns her house and takes her responsibility that the society assigns her.

Traditional Hindu mother and wife Savitri cannot think her life in other ways. Her husband and children are her world. She cannot go beyond them. To listen her husband's every comment silently, to accept his order, to wait him for food even the whole day, to take care of her children from every side etc. are her way of life. She even cannot imagine her life beyond this until she knows her husband's infidelity. But on the other hand, Ramani is not limited within family boundary, Hindu religion and customs. He wants to fly beyond such cultural forms of life. He does not hesitate to keep extramarital relationship with Shanta Bai. His activities are based on individualism, one of the Western features. Ramani is indifferent to Savitri's plight of being alienated because of his nexus with Santa Bai with whom he enjoys keeping extramarital relationship. When there is argument between them, Ramani says, "I'm very sleepy. I'm waiting to bolt the street door and go to bed; that is, if you decide to go out" (88).

This individual trait is one of the causes of tension in the novel. Savitri tries her best to maintain the social life she is destined by Hindu culture but Ramani attempts to go beyond it and forgets his culture.

Narayan presents Ramani as the representative character of Indian society who is away from Indian culture and its social structure. On the other hand, Savitri is still following the religious world order but in later part of the novel she is somehow changed herself. She leaves her house at the last part of the novel but she returns lastly. Here, we can find dynamism of Indian society that is changing slowly.

The cause of conflict is also illustrated by Freud when he says all human beings are guided by their 'Desire'. Ramani desires for Western style of life and remains hostile to the desire of his wife and inevitably there comes a clash between them. The contemporary society of India was also influenced by some natives' desire of imitating the Westerners which resulted in conflict because rest of them opposed such imitation, explicit in Narayan's *The Dark Room*. The female protagonist, Savitri slowly and gradually becomes conscious of male domination and also becomes aware of equality between male and female so she challenges the traditional society. She leaves her house and "walks down the silent street"(89). Most probably, Savitri knows that consciousness is guideline of all human beings so there is no distinction between male and female. The knowledge creates a tension in the novel.

Furthermore, Savitri is a religious figure who always believes on God and worships Him. She not only gives her time to her family and herself but also to God with whom she has deep devotion. Narayan comments:

Now Savitri had before her a little business with her God. She went to the worshipping room lighted the wicks and incense, threw on the image on the wooden pedestal handfuls of hibiscus, jasmine and cerium, and muttered all the sacred chants she had learnt from her mother years ago (4).

But on the other hand, Ramani is secular man who does not care the God and worship Him. He has concentration only in his physical needs and desires so he runs not after the God but to other women outside his family. This is one of the major causes of tension in the novel.

Savitri has belief on tradition, religion and has deep attachment to family members and always loves all human beings in general and her family members in particular. It is one way of life in the novel which sharply contrasts with the modern way of life that is led by Ramani who is self-centred, does not understand other's plight, needs and even forgets his own responsibility to his family and society. This contrast creates tension in the novel that is the representation of whole Indian society.

It is not only the case of Savitri and Ramani who are sharply divided into two modes of life that are Western and Indian, but also we can find such distinction in other characters in the novel. Babu, the only son of Savitri and Ramani, is influenced by Western way of life like his father. He is deeply attracted with Western form of education. He likes English medium school and is obsessed with English film very much. When his mother asks him to go for Hindi film, his remark is explicitly negative on it. So, he says, "I don't like Indian films, mother. I would like to be sent to *Frankenstein* which is coming next week" (25).

On the other hand, his two sisters, Kamala and Sumati are somehow traditional. They are taught to do the household works. They think that it is the female who should do all the household work and male should not interrupt it. In 'Navaratri' festival, there is a plan to show dolls. Kamala and Sumati think that it is their job to decorate these dolls but opposite their thinking, when Babu himself starts to decorate them, they feel unusual and say, "Are you a girl to take a hand in the doll business? Babu, go and play cricket. You are a man"(30). This sort of assumption is the legacy

of Indian culture which Babu directly rejects, "Shut up"(30) because he does not believe on such cultural practice. Due to these two poles of life, there is tension in the novel.

Furthermore, Babu does not believe in stereotype of Indian culture, for he is also instructed by his father to neglect such cultural bonding. He strongly resists the mythical belief of India when there is conflict between Ranga, a cook of their family, and him. There is a belief that a person who looks at Ranga's eyes, he or she turns to stone. Kamala and Sumati warns him, "Many of the furlong and mile stones in the place were once human beings who had dared to look into the cook's eyes"(151). So they request the cook and say, "Forgive him for our sake . . . please take your eyes off him"(150). The modern boy does not afraid with the superstitious belief and rudely remarks, "All right, I will. I am not afraid of your powers of magic"(150). Due to such different views and beliefs, there is conflict and that creates tension in the novel.

Babu is intelligent and has knowledge of modern things like electricity. On the occasion of *Navaratri* festival the children become gay and jubilant. Babu, a boy of artistic taste, wants to decorate the house with dolls which are going to be demonstrated in the festival with electric bulbs. But traditional characters, Kamala and Sumati differ from him who think it is practically the girls' business.

Babu, an accurate archetype of his father, also hates marriage as his father does. When his mother asks about his prospective marriage, wife and children, he comments, "Why do you always talk about marriage? I hate it. I am not going to marry even if it is going to cost me my life"(84). It means he wants freedom and does not like to take any family responsibility as Western people do.

Similarly, the tension caused by the fusion of Western and Indian cultures can also be seen in Ponni and her husband, Mari. Ponni is traditional and superstitious.

She strongly believes on caste system and advocates Savitri's superior belongingness because she is a Brahmin by caste. So she assures Savitri of a safe stay in her house. She is ready to clear a part of the house and she says she will not go there. She further says, "I will buy a new pot for you, and rice, and you can cook your own food. I will never come that way. I will never cook anything in our house which may be repulsive to you. Please come with me"(144). Narayan's description of this type has given the novel a realistic preference of traditional Indian people.

Thus, R. K. Narayan tries to impart us about the split in the contemporary Indian people by the fusion of Western and Indian cultural lives that are mainly represented by Ramani and Savitri. Conventional character Savitri tries to follow the old values, norms, rules and role of a woman assigned to her by the society. She does not like to be mingled in the Western culture adopted by her husband. She believes on Hindu religion, myth, culture and superstition and so on. On the contrary, Ramani, influenced by Western culture, always tries to subvert traditional rules and regulations. These two modes are the major causes of tension in the novel.

3. 2 Cultural Conflict in *The Dark Room*

R.K. Narayan's *The Dark Room* revolves around the issue of cultural conflict between the protagonists Ramani and his wife Savitri. Ramani, who embodies Western norms and values, tries to dismantle every appurtenance of Indian culture. He prefers his existence outside the home and he is messed with the office girl Santa Bai, an official in his office Englandia Insurance Company. Neither has he cared his children nor his wife. On the contrary, Savitri remains faithful to her husband and plays the role of a Hindu woman she is destined to. When Ramani's irresponsibility and ignorance grows higher Savitri leaves home. Even though she is away from home

Savitri realizes about the fate and duty she is prescribed by Hindu culture and returns her husband's home.

Ramani, a senior officer in Englandia Insurance Company, always likes to be a devoted professional in his office. He is punctual and responsible in his office. But when he is with his wife and children at home he does not seem interested with them. He comments his wife for the decoration of the home, about her manner, about the food and also for the cloths she wears. He does not care any lack in his house and does not like to show his weakness to his guests whom he invites. Once his cook says, "there are only a couple of potatoes"(39). He further asks Savitri, "Do the cooking without vegetables and the mustard . . ."(39). Even such a lack is there in his house, he is so much indifferent with it but ironically he has no any feeling of responsibility to the family. Ramani as the guardian of his family is supposed to maintain peace but he destroys every harmony in the family by his sexual indulgement with Shanta Bai.

Ramani is individual character who does not care others' problems, needs and responsibilities. He must have taken more responsibility of his family but he is indifferent to it. He does not care his children's health but does not fail to create a terror on them. When Babu becomes sick cares him but Ramani does not pay any attention towards his health rather he says, "Babu get up; don't miss your school on by account"(1). Savitri, a traditional Indian woman, cares her child Babu's health and caressingly treats him murmuring, "Lie down Baby you are not going to school today"(1). Here, I mean modern people like Ramani are indifferent with others' plight but traditional Hindu religious people like Savitri are filled with love and affection, they have deep attachment to the society or family.

Furthermore, Ramani does not let his wife going out in his absence. He does not attempt to understand his wife's or children's desires and needs. One day, Ramani

comes home faster than other days planning to go for cinema but he does not find his wife at home. He sends his youngest daughter to call Savitri. Savitri surprisingly asks the matter of his arrival so fast. "I don't know mother. I was playing in Kutti's house when he called me up and told me to find you at once. I couldn't stop and talk to father: he looked so angry"(19), says Kamala. She does not dare to ask any question to her father because of fear. The fear is caused owing to the cruelty he shows to his family members. Similarly, her mother is disappointed because of the cruelty of her husband.

But ironically Ramani does whatever he likes even if he does not let his wife go out. He wants to be free almost every time. He enjoys with his wife without their children. Not only with his own wife but also he does not hesitate to move freely with his office staff named Shanta Bai who divorced from her husband. Whenever Shanta Bai is appointed in his office, slowly and gradually, he pays his attention not to his wife but Shanta Bai. Sometimes, he reaches home late because he gives time to Shanta Bai. About his late coming Narayan remarks, "At two o'clock he went home. He drove the car into the garage with as little noise as possible, opening the gate and then the garage door himself. He felt rather irritated afterwards, when he walked back into house from the garage."(65).

Ramani's behaviours are not normal to Savitri. He enjoys his life giving torture to others. He shows his bossy personality as the colonial agent in the colonial period and angrily comments Savitri when she delays to open the door, "who is the master here?" It shows that he still owes the colonizers' hegemonic attitude. He does not feel any sort of guilt rather he knocks on the door loudly, calling "Savitri, Savitri!"(66). Dozen times before she could get up from her bed and come to the door. Ramani severely condemns her, "Have you dined? . . . I suppose you are too

sleepy to serve me . . . sometimes a man may have to return home late. One can't always be rushing back, thinking of the dinner"(66). In this situation, he would have some guilt feeling but behaves as if it was Savitri's mistake. It is actually modern male's master mentality who could not see other's life at all.

Savitri's patience and devotion towards her culture and religion is visible in her visit to a temple. She has great faith upon him even though the priest himself is a morally vile and corrupt person. She is in confrontation with her husband when he comments the priest about the immoral conduction. The temple-priest who is a fairly old man is more hypocritical and worldly and less spiritual. He feels that he has an absolutely correct understanding of human beings. He is very greedy. His yard-stick of measuring people's love of religion is that they should exhibit their faith in religion by offerings to the god. In his talk to Mari, a black-smith, he opines, "Now-a-days you fellow must to worship the God free; no offerings, not even a piece of coconut"(130). In the name of God, he tries to exploit the innocent people like Mari, Ponni etc. in fact, the priest himself is not religious. .

On the other hand, the temptation towards Western culture can be seen in the character of Ramani and his son Babu who always enjoy watching and playing cricket. They do not like anecdotes, repartees and hymns of Savitri. Even though she offers them to listen her recitation of the holy books they turn their faces and dub her a 'conservative'. When Ramani goes to visit different adventurous places like riverside and hillside he becomes very excited. Narayan rightly comments on Ramani's life:

Ramani laughed faithfully and drove the car towards the river. She sat nestling close to him as he drove, and said suddenly. Let us drive round the town once and then go to the river. Ramani stopped,

reversed and drove the car into the town and about the streets. I'm rather mad tonight she said. I hope you don't mind it (71).

Ramani is preoccupied with reason and logic. He does not believe in feeling, love, affection and human sentiments. When Savitri makes up her mind to leave the house because of his excessive domination he is not affected and disappointed, rather he thinks that she will starve and return one day. All the pity and mercy are grasped by the reason. Ramani does not hesitate to beat his own son brutally. Narayan writes:

In helpless anger Babu remained silent. His father slapped him on the cheek. Don't beat me, father, "he said, and Ramani gave him a few more slaps. At this point Savitri dashed forward to protect Babu. She took him aside, glaring at her husband who said, "Leave him alone, he does not need your petting". She felt faint with anger (38).

Furthermore, Ramani, a married but irresponsible man and a boss of Engladia Insurance Company, grows to be hostile to his employees and tries to exploit them as the colonial officers used to exploit and govern the colonized. He has inherited the same culture of the colonizers. The name of the company symbolizes that the English rules are effective in the office. Ramani tries to make commodity to the workers in his company. As a result, the factory owners were getting rich and prosperous day by day, but the workers had to linger in the same poor and pathetic situation. The human relationship has changed into the relationship of money and profit. Humanity has faded way rather exploitation, deception was prevalent everywhere. The trace of exploitation can be deciphered in the following lines:

Her tone was soft and pleasing. Ramani wanted to ask her if she could sing well but restrained himself and "yours is a very interesting story.

Then, I suppose you saw our advertisement?"Yes, I did. I sent my application to all the branch offices and I was called up for interview only by you (52).

The employers are deceived in such a way that the information about the salary is not given previously in the advertisement and when they are selected for the job only then they come to know about their salary which is highly lower than expected. Now, it complicates them whether to accept the job in that low salary or leave it, they are mentally panicked. This is also a kind of official exploitation. That's why modern world is not devoid of exploitation. The following line of the text clarifies the implicit exploitation done on the employees. "I had no business to imagine it because the advertisement never mentioned the amount" (55), Shanta Bai says.

Ramani's actions and activities are perfectly similar to those English people who had governed India for a long time. After India was independent it was again governed by the same cultural values the colonizers had practised in the colonial period. Though colonialism was discerned as the pathetic domination in the past, nowadays any kind of hegemony can be categorized under colonialism; either it is cultural or educational or economic or something related to sports, music films, etc. Thus, colonialism can also be taken to be an act of restructuring a new community. Because of the colonial impact on Ramani, he always dominates his wife just as the colonizers dominate the colonized. He scolds his wife accusing of her committing many mistakes. He does not even favour the meal prepared by Savitri. It means he wants to establish the Western culture in his home. He says:

Brinjals, cucumber, radish and greens, all the twelve months in the year and all the thirty days in the month. I don't know when I shall

have a little decent food to eat. I slave all day in the office for this mouthful. No lack of expenses, money for this and money for that (2).

Here, we can see the conflict between the people embodying Western and the people who are still faithful towards the native Indian culture or the colonized and the colonizer. Savitri is a colonized character whereas Ramani is the colonizer.

The colonialist used to take English language and culture as the means of exploiting the Orient. Wherever they wanted, they used to impose English language in the academia and institutions in the colonies. They themselves wanted to teach, write about and research the Orient. It is an important way of colonizing that is dominating the Orient.

Gangu, in spite of being colonized, wants to know more about English language and English culture. Because she is shaped in such a way that she sees nothing magnificent beyond English language. She can also be considered as the orientalist and or colonialist. Narayan comments, "For serving on public bodies she felt she ought to know a little more English than she needed to read fairy tales and write letters to her husband at the beginning of their married life"(15).

In the same manner, Babu also prefers to read in English school and orients his study of everything in English language. He prefers to watch English film at the cost of Hindi. That sort of tendency appears in him because of the influence of the English culture. Whereas Sumati representing the nationality and tradition states that she does not like English language and English film at all. In this regard, we can see the glimpse of clash between the colonial product (Babu) and its opponent (Sumati) which is substantiated by the following lines:

"I don't like Indian films, Mother. I would like to be sent to *Frankenstein*, which is coming next week". Babu says. "I don't like

English films. Let us go to this tomorrow". Sumati said. "It is because you don't understand English and films". Said Babu. As if you were a master of English and understood all that they say in the films: why do you pretend? Said Sumati (25).

Colonial discourse about the orient including orientalism plays vital role in serving the purpose of European expansion, but it also brought some sort of resistance in almost everywhere in the non-Western world.

In the text also Savitri resists the normalized rules practiced in India just as the colonized resist the colonizers. She is fed up of the nagging and bullying behaviours of Ramani who is an embodiment of colonialism and decides to desert him, the house and the children behind, and passes her time individually. She strongly resists the domination and humiliation of Ramani and challenges, "Do you think I am going to stay here? . . . Do you think that I will stay in your house, breathe the air of your property, drink the water here and eat food buy with your money? No . . ." (88)

Colonizers occupy the land of colonized and absorb their power and rule them as master does to the slave. The colonized has to follow whatever the colonizers order them. Ramani can be interpreted as a follower of British colonizers whereas Savitri, an opponent of that sort colonialism and domination. Though she tries to be free from the clutch of domination, she becomes a mere puppet in the hand of her husband and follows whatever he orders her. Acceptance of one's lot rather than protest or revolt has been ingrained in her and she has been taught to find her happiness in it, although it might be irksome to others. No woman can have autonomous decision society which is exclusively masculine. Narayan writes:

How impotent she was, she thought, she had not the slightest power to do anything at home, and that after fifteen years of married life Baby

looked very ill and she was powerless to keep him in bed; she felt she ought to have asserted herself a little more at the beginning of her married life and then all would have been well (6).

Savitri seems to be bold and brave but in the hand of her husband, who is tyrannical and unkind, becomes weak and powerless. Women in patriarchy are judged by man's law and point of view. This sort of hegemony creates the tension between the male and the female which is analogous to the colonizers and the colonized.

Colonialism has influenced the Indian people in such a way that they commence to consume or take every Western cultural mores and activities as their own. But it is not applicable to all Indians, so there is the emergence of disparity between the characters who imitate Western culture and want to update themselves in changing circumstances, and traditional characters who want only to preserve their primitive culture. Ramani and Babu, influenced by Western thought and culture, always desire to imitate the Western culture whereas Savitri and Sumati do not like any interference on their native culture. Because of two diverse attitudes, there is always conflict or misunderstanding amongst the characters just as the clash seen between the colonized and the colonizers. Impressed with the Westerners' culture, Ramani and Babu try to adopt the whole Western life, sports, language at the cost of their own original Indian life style, mores and games. India

Thus, colonization of almost two centuries, deeply affected India and Indian people were divided within themselves. People like Ramani learnt to dominate and exploit his wife and workers in his house and office. It is completely the Western master mentality to overlook others. Babu and Gangu, the two other characters are also influenced by the Western form of life who try to adopt the Western culture. On the other hand, Savitri like characters are victimized by the attitude and behaviour of

the characters influenced by Western mentality, which is the root cause of conflict in the Indian society. Hence, R. K. Narayan's *The Dark Room* vividly portrays an issue of cultural conflict in the contemporary Indian society.

4. Conclusion

4.1 *The Dark Room*: Tension between Tradition and Modernity

R. K. Narayan's famous novel, *The Dark Room* depicts cultural conflict between some Indian people who have inherited Western culture and the traditional Indian people who are devoted to preserve and promote their own cultural miscellanies. Because of tension, there is internal dynamics in Indian society and Indian nation-state in general. The tension is primarily seen between the female and male characters representing such cultural differences. Along with the characters, Malgudi, the setting of the novel is also presented as a platform for the change of the native culture by the effect of English culture. Moreover, the industrial revolution and colonization have remarkable influence on the characters advocating the righteousness of Western culture which accelerates the emergence of conflict in the novel.

The Dark Room, at first, deals with the early phase of Malgudi that is colonial Indian society which presents the society as primitive, religious and utterly patriarchal. The central female character Savitri is a paragon of this kind of society. She, having the secondary position in the society, represents the position of all women in the pre-colonial India. In such a society, we hardly find the account of the scientific and other modern awareness, for instance, clothing, film, interest in sports, use of modern machines and vehicles etc.

Obsessed with the Western culture, Ramani tries to dismantle the Indian culture in which he finds superstitions and stereotypes. He does not find any empirical reality in the Indian culture. He tries to impose the same practices in his house

exercised in Englandia Insurance Company, a paradigm of colonial office. He likes to live independently leaving the role of guardian he is destined by Hindu culture. On the other hand, Sabitri, a typical Hindu woman, always remains faithful to her husband even though he is reckless to the family members. She hopes that her husband will realize the importance of family one day. Contrary to her expectation Ramani grows unconcerned to the family and is indulged with a girl named Santa Bai in his office. Eventually, Ramani turned out to be hostile to his own wife and children. Overwhelmed by her husband's selfish motives, Sabitri bangs the door and leaves home.

However, in the successive chapters, R. K. Narayan presents the same city Malgudi, in its later phase, which represents the transition in the indigenous culture. In this phase, the modern character Ramani is highly concerned by attributing the Western dispositions like independent life, interest in film, use of luxurious vehicle, etc. Ramani strives his best to subvert the primitive culture due to Western influence. Atheist Ramani is indifferent to his duties and responsibilities in his family and even does not hesitate to have extra-marital relationship with Shanta Bai, which consequently brings about conflict in the novel.

Because of colonization and industrialization, there was change in Indian society that is too conspicuous in the novel. It has made the life of the people comfortable and happy, but if the people cannot accommodate the new scenario, they have to suffer much. Ramani and Babu are modern characters who can adapt the industrial and scientific advancement whereas Savitri, Gangu, Sumati, Kamala cannot adjust in the changed scenario due to their unshakable faith in their way of life,

culture, religion, and responsibilities. This portrays a conflict resulting largely from incompatible cultural entities.

Tension and internal dynamics in the Indian society happen because of the impact of Westernization, modernization and colonization. Colonialism has influenced a section of Indian people in such a way that they commence to imitate European mores and activities as their own. This has given rise to disparity between the modern characters who want to reform themselves in changing circumstances and the traditional characters who want to preserve their own ancient culture. Traditional values are followed and implemented by the females; Western values are imitated by the males. Thus, there is almost a subversion of the originality of both cultures, and there is double and partial existence of these cultures which ultimately result into tension that brings about dynamism in society.

In this way, *The Dark Room* visualizes the tension between tradition and modernity, which causes the internal dynamics in the Indian society. The tension appears because of the female's dominant faith in primitive, religious, patriarchal norms and values and male's desire to follow the Western forms of life.

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