

The Theme of Indianness in the selected short fiction of R. K. Narayan and Rabindranath Tagore: A comparative Study

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Abstract

Literature is reflection of the society. One curious thing we noticed that Indian English literature has the wide spread of popular story collections. The topic is related to the present society even though the writings belonged to the latter 19th century and 20th century. Rabindranath Tagore and R. K. Narayan presented short stories keep in view of Indian citizens. It is notice that the characters that were drawn from every walk of life. The major characters of the writers' display ethical values in short fiction.

The theme of Indianness in the selected short fiction of the both writers is considered 'as a compass how it shows destination of journey to travelers so as it shows a path to the readers to reach destination of life.' Indian writers put their effort in Indian English fiction to yield success. They selected theme of the writings to be Indian in thought and feeling, emotion and experience to display Indianness.

Keywords: ethical values, reflection, compass, comparative and major

Every Story narration has a sort of structure. The comprehensive and understating of narration is a combination of the basic features, a sequence of events, and a plot.

Rabindranath Tagore (7th May 1861 – 7th August 1941) belonged to the latter 19th century and 20th century left a remarkable foot step in presentation of short stories. He was a versatile genius. He was a poet, playwright, novelist, short story writer, artist, composer, philosopher, reformer, humanist, and educationist. He won the Nobel Prize for his master piece *Gitanjali* in 1913. He was the most prominent writer among the Indian Writers who gave a new turn to Indian writing and thought in the 20th century. The recurring themes of Rabindranath Tagore's short fiction have 'tears in things' that portray of characters which reflects truth. All these produce vivid picture i.e., replica of the society through painstaking feelings of characters that are presented in his short fiction.

Professor N. K. Sidhanta observes in Rabindranath Tagore' short fiction has follows:

"It is the men (it is often the women) who matter."

Rabindranath Tagore's some collection of short stories is: *The Runaway and Other stories, broken ties and other stories, and Mashi and other stories.*

Rabindranath Tagore's portrays an innocent Subhashini, deaf and dumb girl such a psychological conflict to lead her life in the story *Suhba*. She has questions in unexpressed words that display in her feelings. She could not get answers which made satisfactory to her level of understanding. It is a remarkable point in Rabindranath

Tagore's short stories that his creativity in selection of themes are widened from individual to familial; familial to social; and ignorance to intelligence.

In short story *Mashi*, the writer presents Mashi as a generous woman. She gives instructions to Mani, wife of Jotin, an ill healthy husband. Mashi understands little age of Mani to take much time to know her family's responsibility. She tries to be away to take care of her ill healthy husband. Mashi consoles Jotin by saying that Mani learns responsibility of her family and do service accordingly. Jotin listens to Mashi and talks usual matter that he may leave the world by ill health. Mashi says to Jotin, "Baba, try to sleep". Jotin replies, "No, Mashi, don't ask me to sleep. If I sleep I shall never awake. I still need to keep awake a little longer."

Mashi's instructions to Mani came into effect gradually. Marni realizes her responsibility of being near to her husband in needy time. Mani observes light in eyes of Jotin when she came to nearby him.

Rabindranath Tagore presented generous nature of Indian society in his story *Mashi*.

In his short story *The Castaway*, Kiran appears as a generous woman. Kiran admires her husband Sharath's taking care of her when she became ill healthy. The family moved to chandernager. She was getting recovery from illness.

One night time, an orphan by Nilkanta came to Sharath's house. Kiran showed warm interest towards the boy, who got rebirth when his boat had downed into river in the storm. The boy belonged to a theatrical group. Kiran and her mother-in-law listened the Indian classical songs that were sung by the boy. Kiran provided shelter and food to the boy.

Nilkanta became a mischievous boy. He hid an inkstand that is of Satish, Kiran's brother-in-law. Satish showed his finger towards Nilkanta for it was missed in presence of Kiran and Sharat. Then Kiran took the boy into another room she said with her gentle voice, "Nilu, if you really have taken the inkstand give it to me quietly, and I shall see that no one says another words to you". The boy burst into tears and hid his face into his hands.

Kiran came back from the room and said, "I am sure Nilkanta has not taken the inkstand". Sharat and Satish wanted to cross examine the boy. Kiran refused for that.

One day before Kiran's family return to their home, she went into Nilkanta's room. Her wish is to give gifts to the boy before departure. Then, she opened his box to put two new suits of clothes, a pair of shoes, and a banknote. Kiran hands touched the inkstand that was missed. Then, she sat down with the inkstand in her hand, puzzled a lot. At that time, Nilkanta came into the room. He saw all these from behind Kiran. He thought that Kiran had come to catch him. He left the house, silently having no answer to say to Kiran.

The generous woman put the gifts into Nilkanta's box. The next day, they did not see the boy. Kiran does not want to see Nilkanta, an adolescent boy to be called as

‘a thief’. She threw the inkstands into river. The writers ended the story with display of her broader mind and kind hearted nature.

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayan (10th October 1906 – 13th May 2001) belonged to 20th century. He was a Novelist, essayist, and short story writer. He won Sahitya Akademi Award in 1960 for his novel *The Guide*.

His short stories that flowed from his pen brought him international recognition. They are *Malgudi Days*, *Under the Banyan Tree and Other Stories*, *Dodu and Other Stories*.

Narayan’s characters are drawn from the lower and middle class. His stories can be understood from these points of view. Theme of Indianness, one such kind of mood, philosophy portray of characters, locations of village, nature and forest are salient features of his writing.

E.M. Foster says about R.K. Narayan’s narration:

“The primitive power of keeping the reader in suspense and playing on his curiosity”.

Narayan gives priority to truth in *Like the Sun*. Sekhar says, “Truth is like the sun”. Sekhar abide by say truth one day in year whatever may happen.

Sekhar is a school teacher. He feels evaluation of a hundred papers a burden to him. The Headmaster of school invites him that evening to be a judge for his singing performance. He was one of music critics in the town.

He arranged a drummer and a violinist to be accompany for his singing. He went on the sing a full song composed by *Thyagaraja*. The headmaster is singing with hoarse tone. He sang three songs; one of them was in ‘*Kalyani Raga*’. Sekhar observed that the headmaster sang with full of false rhythm.

The headmaster looked at Sekhar and asked how his performance was. Shall I go on? Sekhar replied with an unpleasant face, “Please don’t sir; I think this will do.....” He felt the greatest pity for the headmaster’s poor performance.

Then, the headmaster asked his opinion.

Sekhar asked, “Can’t I give it tomorrow, sir?” The Headmaster said, “No, I want it now – your frank opinion. Was it good?”

Sekhar replied. “No, Sir....” Sekhar left from there silently. He reached home and felt worried about his official life thereafter.

The next day, the headmaster told Sekhar that no one would tell him ‘truth about his performance’. He told Sekhar to evaluate a hundred papers by tomorrow. Sekhar reminded him that he gave ten days time for that earlier. The headmaster ordered him that it can be completed by tomorrow.

Narayan presents *Like the Sun* story to remind Gandhian’s ideology ‘Truth ever triumphes’. Thus, the story ends on ‘note of truth in life of humanbeings’.

In the writer's short fiction *Under the Banyan Tree*, Nambi is a pandit in temple, Somal village. He is an aged person. He has much perfection in narrating the Indian classical stories of Dasharatha, Kapila, Ashoka etc. The villagers assemble at temple on the full moon day under the banyan tree.

One day, Nambi began the Indian classical story. There was the king Vikramaditya lived, his minister was....." he paused. He could not get beyond it. He got up silently and went into temple.

Nambi suffered a lot for 'not having previous capability of story narration'. He called all the villagers on the next full moon day. He said to them, "It is the Mother who gives the gifts, and it is She who takes away the gifts".

He thanked the Goddess heartfully for blessed him all those years. Narayan illustrates Nambi character in such a way that is of the Goddess' blessings is the hidden power behind his capability. The Mother allowed him all those days to tell stories to the villagers. Thus, the writer ends the story on a note of 'Philosophical understanding'.

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