



Masculine Philosophy In The Writings Of R.K. Narayan

Rahul Sharma Department of Humanities, Graphic Era Hill University,
Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India 248002

ABSTRACT

Hegemonic masculinity maintains men's social dominance, whereas accentuated femininity highlights women's subordination. Historically, women have been seen as second class citizens. Anytime the term "Feminist" has been used, a storm has ensued. The purpose of this study is to analyze the ways in which the female gender is relegated to a secondary role in the books *The Dark Room* (1938) and *Lamps in the Whirlpool* (1997) by R. K. Narayan and R. K. Krishnan, respectively. The books' main characters, usually women, are portrayed as underdogs fighting for survival. This article will analyze the representations of masculinity and femininity in the two books. Author R. K. Narayan aimed to free oppressed women from male slavery in his writings by creating a new legal framework. In this research, we examine how his female characters challenge prevalent ideas about women in Indian society and construct new identities that recognize them as whole human beings.

KEYWORDS The Dark Room, R. K. Narayan, Hegemonic masculinity.

INTRODUCTION

That Spooky Place in the Basement The heroine, Savitri, is on the prowl for her own unique sense of humanity since she is not happy to be a simple slave to her husband and to spend her time outside the house feeling powerless and vulnerable while enduring mental agony and insecurity at the hands of the priest, another male superior. So, defeated by the unchanging harsh realities of Indian culture, Savitri comes home to her loved ones with a negative outlook. *The Dark Room* documents a woman's early struggle to discover self-expression and fulfillment at a time when society still required gradual change rather than a sudden breakthrough. Savitri may have failed as a character, but she succeeded in getting Ramani and the rest of the readers to reflect about the place of women in Indian culture.

'Masculinity' is a word used to describe a normative pattern of characteristics, actions, and roles that are typical of young males. Research suggests that several traditionally male characteristics have a biological basis, despite the fact that masculinity is a social construction. The extent to which biological or societal factors determine masculinity is a topic of discussion. Traditionally, boys and men

have been socialized to assume tasks and responsibilities that are deemed masculine. The definition of masculinity changes from one civilization to the next and from one community to the next. But the social roles, actions, and meanings that are expected of men and women at all times and in all cultures are what we mean when we talk about masculinities and femininities. As there is no universally agreed-upon definition of either "man" or "woman," it is necessary to treat beliefs about gender as distinct from biological sex and to recognize their multiple nature. Other axes of identity—such as class, color, ethnicity, age, and sexuality—structure and express masculinities and femininities. The Indian subcontinent has long been a culture that values masculinity. Because of their traditional roles as breadwinners and protectors, males are expected to display traditional masculine traits. Because a strong, confident guy is the best bet for guiding the community forward, society as a whole does its best to foster masculinity in young males.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sapna Cheryan (2020) Recognizing a lesser-known kind of cultural prejudice termed masculine defaults is necessary for understanding and addressing women's underrepresentation in majority-male areas and vocations. When cultural elements prioritize, reward, or consider typical, normal, neutral, or essential traits or actions associated with the male gender role, this is an example of a masculine default. Feminist theorists have characterized and examined masculine defaults before, but here we provide a more precise definition, differentiate masculine defaults from other types of prejudice, and explain how they contribute to women's underrepresentation. We also go through strategies for overcoming male norms and obstacles to doing so. Identification and countering of masculine defaults on several levels of organizational culture (i.e., ideas, institutional rules, interactions, persons) might aid efforts to boost women's involvement in majority-male departments and firms.

Colleen English (2017) A key role in sports is played by hegemonic masculinity, a framework in which stereotypically male attributes are overemphasized. Many women and men are excluded from this sort of masculinity because they lack the requisite characteristics. I contend that reducing damaging and marginalizing hegemonic masculinity in sport is possible via reform that focuses on reducing hypercompetitive attitudes. In order to prove my point, I first argue against the binary character of sports. I do so by pointing out that every sporting conclusion is a combination of winning and losing, that draws may be meaningful and illuminating, and that victorious and losing outcomes don't necessarily convey whole tales. Second, I argue that including more possible outcomes in sports may assist make performing well and becoming better an equal part of the exam and the competition. In the end, I believe these changes will reduce hegemonic masculinity and improve sports for everyone.

Julie A. Nelson (2015) Despite its revolutionary significance, most feminist work on the economics of care has run the danger of further linking care exclusively to women and to their conventional roles in society. As a counterpart to the concept of mothering, this article reawakens the image of "husbandry," here construed as attentive cultivation, caring, and control. Perhaps reawakening male responsibility for care and renewing consciousness of the importance of concern and carefulness in all of economic life might be aided by a robust masculine prototype of care. In contrast to "economic man," the "good husbandman" has a richer existence because of his responsive and responsible behavior. This article explains why a detailed picture is necessary, offers some potential uses in areas including environmental protection, healthcare, and corporate administration, and discusses a few potential pitfalls.

Pease, B.(2014) I studied the ideology and actions of profeminist males (Pease, *Recreating males*) some time ago. At the time, I argued that the question of whether or not males can and will change is essential to the possibility of women achieving gender equality. I argue that if we want to alter the status quo of gender roles, we must first alter the everyday experiences and perspectives of males. This study's foundation was my own life as a white, heterosexual male who strongly identifies as a feminist.

Scott Rubarth (2014) In discussions of ancient Greek masculinity and manhood, scholars tend to treat the concepts as though they were uniform and straightforward. That what it meant to be a man varied depending on the setting is what I want to demonstrate, demonstrating that the ancient Greeks, like modern people, had conflicting models or constructions of gender. The Athenian civic model, the Spartan martial model, and the Stoic philosophical model will be the focal points of my discussion on the development of the male gender in classical and post-classical Greece. I will discuss the similarities and differences among these three, as well as how each one makes sense in the context of broader ideological settings and specific demands, and how all three are used in contemporary conceptions of masculinities.

SAVITRI AS A SUBORDINATE IN R. K. NARAYAN'S THE DARK ROOM

Savitri, a docile housewife who is married to Ramani, an upstanding member of the staff of the Engladia Insurance Company, is the novel's protagonist. In addition to Kamala and Sumati, they also have a son named Babu. Savitri is the archetypal nice Indian housewife of her era: she never raises her voice or her hands in protest of her husband's dominance and neglect so that she might protect her girls' innocence. Everything, from mealtimes to houseguests, is subject to Ramani's whims and fancy, and that includes the daughters and their mother.

Savitri is held in high esteem when she patiently watches her husband and children be abused behind her back and yet manages to keep her family together. She exemplifies the perfect Indian wife in every way: she's beautiful and she'll give up her life for her husband. Ramani's girls are also starving for affection, yet they never even manage to elicit a smile from their father. Ramani becomes tired with taunting his calm wife, so he begins having an affair with a gorgeous lady called Shanta Bai who works in his workplace, which is an insult to his wife. After hearing the news from her neighbor, Savitri forces herself to remain calm. She is too afraid of Ramani's rages to do anything, and she has such a poor sense of self-worth from years of abuse that she believes she is to blame for the affair. But when Ramani's treatment of her increases, Savitri cracks. He has ignored her every desperate effort to repair their marriage. She throws her wedding necklace at Ramani (the wedding necklace is as significant in India as the wedding ring is in the west) and releases years of pent-up rage and grief, lamenting that she has no rights in society even if she wanted to assert them and is only a chattel till the day she dies. The only option then is to end your life.

Savitri flees the home in a panic, planning to commit suicide by jumping into the Sarayu River. She drowns but floats to the surface, where a local hood called Mari spots her and rescues her, pumping the water out of her lungs as he does so. He probes for the motivation behind her suicide attempt and reassures her that there is always another way forward. Ponni, the crook's wife, helps clean Savitri up and tells her that a life of meditation and prayer would bring her peace. Savitri decides to become a Hindu nun and spend her days at the temple. Instead, she is harassed and stared at by other males, and she regularly fights with the chauvinist priest who is offended by the sight of a woman working in the temple, which is traditionally reserved for male Brahmins of the Hindu priesthood. Savitri, now despondent and cynical, starts to worry about her girls and wonders whether she was foolish to abandon them. She also worries how Ramani is treating them. All of her efforts to get away from her family have been futile, she thinks, since there is literally nowhere else she can go. And she knows that going away won't save her girls or give her any piece of mind. Savitri, now peaceful and reflective after having accepted her fate, returns to Malgudi and her house. Yet, nothing seems to change. Ramani continues to act in the same obnoxious manner in which he has always done so, gloating spitefully over the fact that his defiant wife has finally learnt her place. Savitri rises up, but is ultimately vanquished. This is one of the few of Narayan's books that delves deeply into the gender inequality that pervaded traditional Indian culture in the middle of the twentieth century.

HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY

Because gender inequality has persisted for over a millennium, it is taken for granted that men will dominate and women would submit to them. Gender inequality persists because of underlying psychological tensions. Ramani in **The**
8656 | Rahul Sharma Masculine Philosophy In The Writings Of R.K. Narayan

Dark Room is such a snooty guy who demands absolute perfection from his wife Savitri and becomes more irritable when she falls short of his standards. In a similar vein, Lamps in the Whirlpool's Swaminathan personifies heartlessness. He has no regard for how his wife feels at all. She was treated like a slave in the home they shared since he only married her so she could do all the housework.

As a result of the husbands' abuse of their wives, the protagonists of the story are forced to make a life-altering choice. In contrast, Girija's rebellion results in her becoming a stronger, more independent woman, whereas Savitri's only leads to failure. Marriage in India strips women of their individuality. A formal education does not provide them with a purpose in life. They are used as household sacrifices as part of the ritual of keeping the home.

TWO SIDES OF WOMEN'S REVOLTS AGAINST SUBORDINATION

Narayan initially portrays women as victims while being meek and subordinate to males in *The Dark Room*, a pre-independence tale published in 1938. Another subset of women, however, was becoming more aware of the ways in which they were being used and assaulted. Narayan describes *The Dark Room* as a "early testament of the 'Women's lib' movement'" (My Days, 119), and all four female protagonists—Savitri, Shanta Bai, Gangu, and Poni—share a desire to challenge the traditional views of women in India's superstitious Hindu culture. Narayan's heroine Savitri, like Ibsen's Nora, fights against women being expected to be completely faithful and devoted to their partners. Savitri is a middle-class housewife who is submissive and subservient to her philandering and bullying husband Ramani. They have three children, all of whom are in school. She remains in his service well into middle age, bearing all of his mistreatment and treachery. But she becomes resentful of her husband's intimacies with Shanta Bai, a beautiful lady influenced by western culture. She becomes a rebel against the male-dominated culture in India after being stunned by her husband and realizing that she has been used like a puppet twice: first by her father before marriage, and again at her husband's home. Mild-mannered Savitri rebels against the mythological connotation of her name, saying, "I'm a human being. — You men will never grant that." You treat us like stuffed animals if you're in the mood for a cuddle, but as slaves whenever you're not. You can't just fondle us whenever and kick us whenever you want. Savitri abandons her spouse without compensation since she has shown herself capable of achieving success on her own. Ironically, she eventually realizes that she cannot function without males. "If I take the train and go to my parents, I shall feed on my father's pension; if I go back home, I shall be living on my husband's earnings, and then on Babu," she adds. Savitri's uprising, in which she protests the patriarchal society, is similar to Nora's uprising in Ibsen's play. However, Savitri's return to Ramani in shame puts her at odds with Ibsen's Nora, who abandons her husband and children forever. In his article "R.K. Narayan and the East- West Theme," A. N. Kaul writes, "...unlike Ibsen's heroine, Narayan

does not bang the door but has it banged and that in the end, her dream of feminine independence and dignity over, she returns submissively to the house never again to stray in thought or deed.

Truth be told, Narayan does not support the idea that women should be subservient to men. He depicts Savitri's predicament, in which she believes she must leave the home and then return. The writer satirizes a male-dominated society that resorts to religion to justify its treatment of women as property. Savitri leaves her home and eventually settles in at a priest's temple, where she also finds work. The priest is described as "the most disagreeable character" by Fakrul Alam in his article "Reading R. K. Narayan Post colonially," who writes, "clearly Narayan has no sympathy at all for the official upholder of tradition, religion, and caste." Savitri has shown that she is not a tradition-bound lady who accepts her destiny as predetermined thanks to her rebellion. She figures out why women are expected to be submissive to males. She tells her husband, "We are responsible for our position; we accept the food, shelter, and comfort that you give, and are what we are."

Furthermore, Narayan does not just highlight the impact of westernization on women's status. The story portrays Savitri's opponent, the single working lady Shanta Bai, as a house-breaker because she cites Omar Khayyam, disdains Indian mythological films, and has a penchant for the works of Garbo and Dietrich. Shanta Bai openly opposes the gender-based norms of India's patriarchal culture. She and her children turn their backs on her alcoholic husband, and in doing so, they tear down the dollhouse. However, in the process of asserting her independence, she tramples on Savitri's family's tranquility and turns Ramani into a sexist. Thus, via Savitri's insurrection, Narayan raises questions about the long-established role of women in India's tradition-bound orthodox culture, and he demonstrates his loathing of westernized mentality by depicting Shanta Bai unfavorably as a wanderer and wrecker of families. Despite Savitri's defeat and Shanta Bai's reputation as a house-burner, it is Savitri's trusted confidante Gangu who strikes a healthy middle ground between conformity and individuality. Gangu is well-educated, and we learn that she is preparing for a career in movies, music, politics, and as Malgudi's representative to the All India Women's Conference. Her spouse, a school teacher who shares her feminist values, is completely on board with her independence. In *The Dark Room*, Narayan depicts another female character who goes by the name Poni. When Savitri is in danger of drowning, it is the blacksmith-burglar's wife who comes to the rescue. She is a middle-aged lady without children, making her extremely vulnerable in that culture, but she has total independence and power over her spouse. Poni's husband, Mari, has a good time with his dominant wife, who is also the novel's most vocal and courageous character. Additionally, Poni instructs the defeated Savitri on how to handle and govern a

man, saying, "Keep the men under the rod, and they will be all right." They'll tie you up and treat you like a dog if you show them you care.

In Mr. Sampath: The Painter of Malgudi, Shanti defies convention by refusing to live as a housewife or care for her husband. She won't follow the cultural norm of donning all-white attire. After leaving her kid in the hands of strangers, she becomes Mr. Sampath's mistress and enters the world of cinema. After seeing that the outside world was hostile and unhelpful to women, she decided to return to the lifestyle expected of a widow in Malgudi.

Even though Savitri and Shanti's rebellion against Malgudi's patriarchal culture is ultimately unsuccessful, it serves as a source of inspiration for generations of women to follow. They have both identified the root of their withdrawal. The newcomers learn from their mistakes, arm themselves with the tools they lacked that Savitri and Shanti lacked, and shatter the norms and stereotypes that have held women in submissive roles to males.

CONCLUSION

Savitri, the heroine of *The Dark Room*, isn't happy with being nothing more than her husband's slave, so she sets out to discover who she really is as a person. When she understands that her quest for independence and personal dignity is leading nowhere, she accepts her destiny with calm resignation despite an inexpressible anguish that has seeped into her spirit. This is her method of resistance to her oppressive spouse. They need to be aware of their rights in order to combat prejudice in the community. They need to speak up against the systematic violence and brutality directed against them, and condemn a culture that rewards subservience to males and inhibits women from establishing their own identities. Narayan's approach to the women's liberation movement is notable since he does not promote either western philosophy or the stagnant Malgudian culture. But being a traditionalist, he builds the movement on the foundation of Malgudi customs, such that Shanta Bai is depicted as a domestic terrorist, Rosie adopts the traditional name Nalini, and Daisy departs Malgudi.

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