

1818390031

BA English

ENG 302 Introduction to Prose

Answer NO-01

R.K.Narayan represents Indian Society in his short stories.

R. K. Narayan is one of the most celebrated and finest Indian novelists of his generation writing in English writing in English. He was born on 1906 in Chennai, India. His full name was Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayan. Original name was "Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayanswami". He globally known for his fictional writings of Malgudi. Also, he was amongst the first few Indians who started writing Indian literature in English. Some of the most prominent contemporary authors of his time include Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, etc. He was born in a family of Tamil Brahmins. He was the second eldest son in a family of eight children. He was born in the Madras Presidency of British India but still made a reputed name for himself even amongst the conventional English readers. Narayan was an avid reader from his childhood days and loved to read the writings of some of the best authors of that time. Some of his favorite authors were Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Wodehouse. Narayan developed a deep interest in writing after reading all these phenomenal authors and thus started to look for opportunities to showcase his abilities to the world. He took four years to complete his graduation, which was a year longer than the normal duration of the course. And, then he started teaching in a school but soon decided to quit this job to pursue a full-time career in writing. Narayan was once visiting Coimbatore, and there R.K. fell in love with a girl named Rajam. After facing several obstacles, he finally married Rajam in 1934. Narayan is best known for his fictional writings, but he did not start his published writing journey with a work of fiction. His first publication was a book review of the Development of Maritime Laws of 17th-Century England. Later, he worked as a short story writer for a local newspaper. Along with writing for local newspapers and magazines, Narayan also started working on his first novel "Swami and Friends" and finally completed this novel in 1930. R.K. Narayan then showed the novel to several publications but was rejected by all the publishers. The biggest breakthrough for R.K. Narayan came when he got a recommendation for "Swami and Friends" publication from the renowned English writer *Graham Greene*. The recommendation came because Narayan had earlier sent a copy of his novel to one of his friends in England, and then his friend showed the novel to Graham Greene. "Swami and Friends" finally got published in 1935 and received a positive perception. Also, it was amongst the 100 Most Influential Novels by BBC in 2019. Green also helped publish Narayan's next two novels, *The Bachelor of Arts* in 1937 and *The Dark Room* in 1938. The published novels were appreciated by the critics but failed to sell many book copies. Also, these two novels, along with "Swami and Friends," are considered a part of a trilogy based on a common theme. R.K. Narayan deeply loved his wife, Rajam. But in 1939, Rajam suffered from typhoid and died soon after. The death of his wife badly impacted R.K. Narayan, and his mental health was affected very badly. Also, he was now left alone to look after his three-year-old daughter, Hema. Such a personal loss of Narayan provided him with the inspiration for his next novel, "The English Teacher". With the publication of this novel, Narayan's writing slowly started to get the deserved recognition and appreciation from the readers. Narayan also started his own publishing house. What was called "Indian Thought Publications". What was in the biggest commercial success for Narayan came with the publication of "The Financial Expert" in 1952 and was also hailed as one of the most original fictional writings of the year. R.K. Narayan was also nominated as a member of Rajya Sabha, the Upper House of Indian

1818390031

BA English

ENG 302 Introduction to Prose

Parliament, in 1980. He was nominated to the Rajya Sabha for his extraordinary contributions to literature. The legendary writing career of R.K. Narayan came to an end with his final book "Grandmother's Tale" in 1992. R.K. Narayan died on 2001, at 94 in Chennai.

R. K. Narayan has written a large number of short stories which have been collected and published in six volumes, *Dodu and Other Stories*, *Malgudi Days*, *Cyclone and Other Stories*, *Lawley Road and Other Stories*, *Astrologer's Days and Other Stories*, *A Horse and Two Goats*. Many of the stories in these collections were first published in the leading Madras daily, *The Hindu*. He also contributed some stories to leading American journals like *The Reporter*, *The New Yorker*, *Vogue* and others. His stories belong to the Indian soil and are redolent of its culture. His stories depict South Indian life and his view of the world and those who live in it. Simple but fascinating plot, lively characterization, strict economy of narration and elegant simplicity of language are features of his short stories. Narayan's stories produce one single vivid effect. They seize the attention of the reader from the outset. His purpose does not seem to be moral and didactic like that of Aesop's or Tolstoy's. However, fate does play its part in some of his stories. His stories attract both foreign and Indian students. His stories serve a good introduction to the foreigner who wants to know Indian life.

R. K. Narayan said that he found English the most rewarding medium to employ for his writing. Because it came to him very easily: "English is a very adaptable language. And it's so transparent it can take on the tint of any country." Critics frequently praise the unaffected standard English with which Narayan captures the Indian sensibility, particularly the South Indian ambience. His unpretentious style, his deliberate avoidance of convoluted expressions and complicated grammatical constructions, his gentle and subtle humour, all this gives his writing an elegant, unforced simplicity that is perfectly suited to the portrayal of ordinary life, of all classes and segments of Indian society, household servants, herdsman, saints, crooks, merchants, beggars, thieves, hapless students. He was essentially an old-fashioned storyteller. With Addisonian wit, Twainian humour and Chekhovian irony, he depicted everyday occurrences, moments of insight; while some of his stories are essentially sketches, quite undramatic, others feature the ironic reversals associated with O. Henry. Although his characters are imbued with distinctively Indian values, their dilemmas are universal.

Among the nineteen stories in Narayan's first collection, '*Malgudi Days*' there are two stories, "Old Bones" and "Neighbours' Help" that are laced with supernatural elements. This volume includes such memorable stories as "The Gold Belt," "The White Flower," "An End of Trouble," and "Under the Banyan Tree." Some of the stories may be viewed as social criticism; Narayan looks with a satiric eye on various aspects of traditional South Indian society, particularly the dowry system and the powerful role of astrology and other forms of superstition. One of the finest stories in the collection, "The Mute Companions," centers on the ubiquitous Indian monkey, a source of meager income for poor people and a source of delight for children. Adopting the omniscient point of view yet without moralizing or judging, Narayan portrays the life of Sami the dumb beggar, whose "very existence depended on the behavior of the monkey." Having taught the monkey several tricks, Sami is able for a time to subsist on the earnings of the clever creature, who is his "only companion." This brief story is an excellent specimen of Narayan's art, revealing his ability to portray a segment of society that typically

1818390031

BA English

ENG 302 Introduction to Prose

goes unnoticed. The story emphasizes the passiveness characteristic of the poor Indian, his acceptance of his Karma, or fate. Narayan's gentle social criticism, too, emerges: "Usually [Sami] avoided those big places where people were haughty, aloof, inaccessible and kept formidable dogs and servants." As in many of his stories, Narayan in "The Mute Companions" blends humor and sadness. *Malgudi Days*, it should be noted, is also the title of a later collection, published in the United States in 1982. Eight of the thirty-two stories in this collection "Naga," "Selvi," "Second Opinion," "Cat Within," "The Edge," "God and the Cobbler," "Hungry Child," and "Emden" were previously uncollected; the remaining stories were selected from Narayan's two earlier volumes, *An Astrologer's Day* and *Lawley Road*.

In his second collection, 'Dodu and Other Stories', Narayan focused on themes related to motherly love, South Indian marriages, the financial and economic frustrations of the middle class, and childhood. Among the outstanding pieces in this volume of seventeen stories are "Dodu," "Gandhi's Appeal," "Ranga," "A Change," "Forty-five a Month" and "The One-Armed Giant." What was originally published in *The Hindu*, as most of his stories have been, "The One-Armed Giant" was the first story that Narayan wrote. The title story, "Dodu," satirically focuses on adult attitudes toward children. "Dodu was eight years old and wanted money badly. Dodu had no illusions about the generosity of his elders. They were notoriously deaf to requests." One of the significant contributions of Narayan is his uncanny ability to portray children their dreams, their mischief, their psychology. "Ranga," an early tale, is a moving story of a motherless child developing into a disillusioned youth. "Forty-five a Month" is a simple and tender story of the relationship of a father and his family, his wife and their young daughter. The conflict between economic security and the little pleasures of life is evocatively and movingly delineated; indeed, this depiction of a white-collar worker eking out his dreary existence reflects the experience of an entire generation in modern India.

In 'Lawley Road', as in most of his fiction, Narayan is concerned more with character than with plot. He notes that he discovers "a story when a personality passes through a crisis of spirit or circumstances," but some stories present flashes of significant moments in characters' lives without any dramatic circumstances; others simply show "a pattern of existence brought to view." Many of the pieces in this collection have a reportorial quality, there are sketches and vignettes, character studies and anecdotes. Of the twenty-eight stories gathered here, fourteen are reprinted from previous collections. The title story is delightful. Named after a typical thoroughfare in the fictitious city of Malgudi, the story recounts how Kabir Lane is renamed as Lawley Road. The narrator is one of Narayan's most engaging recurring characters, whom the people of Malgudi have nicknamed the "Talkative Man," or TM for short, who lends distance and historicity to the story. In another strong story, "The Martyr's Corner," the focus is on a humble seller of South Indian snacks and Chappatis which also called wheat-flour pancakes rather than on the violent action. It is the character of the vendor, his dreary and drab life and his attitude toward existence that holds the interest of the reader.

Under the *Banyan Tree and Other Stories* is a superb retrospective collection of twenty-eight tales. It published specifically for American readers; almost all the stories are drawn from earlier volumes. When the collection appeared on the American scene, several glowing

1818390031

BA English

ENG 302 Introduction to Prose

reviews were published in the leading weeklies and periodicals. This collection further confirms Malgudi's place as a great imaginary landscape. The title story, fittingly taken from Narayan's first collection, reaffirms storytelling as a central human activity. The villagers of Somal "lived in a kind of perpetual enchantment. The enchanter was Nambi the storyteller." Yet, having regaled his audience for several years with his tales, Nambi spends the rest of his life in "great consummate silence."

'The Grandmother's Tale and Selected Stories' was titled 'The Grandmother's Tale and Other Stories' in the paperback edition. It was the first collection of Narayan's fiction that attempted to give a comprehensive overview of his more than fifty years of productivity. Many of the stories, including "A Horse and Two Goats" and "Lawley Road," have been widely anthologized for many years. Others, including "Salt and Sawdust" and the title story, make their first North American appearance in this collection. Many of the stories are based on humble but complex characters engaged in daily life in India. As a collection, they demonstrate the richness of Indian life, which blends ancient tradition with Western technological modernity, but Narayan's stories do not call attention to the setting. Rather, they focus on the characters, showing with gentle humor the wonderful absurdity that makes one human and the ironic twists that shape one's life. In "Salt and Sawdust," for example, Narayan presents a childless housewife who cannot cook—her sense of taste is so bad that she cannot tell the difference between salt and sawdust. Her poor husband is forced to take over the cooking, while his wife occupies herself with writing a novel. However, when the novel is finally completed, the publisher advises the wife to turn it into a cookbook. Narayan was a master of the small details that make domestic scenes seem true and important. Although the wife is made fun of in "Salt and Sawdust," she is a fully rounded character. The humor is good-natured, and Narayan's respect for humans with all their flaws never wavers. 'The Grandmother's Tale and Selected Stories' is adapted from a tale Narayan's mother told him about his own great-grandmother. The story is narrated in a winding fashion by a young boy who is sent to live with his strict grandmother. Although he resents his new situation at first, he gradually comes under the spell of the story she tells him, in bits and pieces, about her own grandmother's life. The grandmother's story is set firmly in India. The heroine is married in a traditional ceremony at the age of seven, but her husband abandons her to take a new wife. The landscape she crosses to reclaim her husband is clearly the Indian subcontinent. Ironically, regaining her husband costs her her independence. "The Grandmother's Tale" is unlike many of Narayan's stories in having a strong and admirable central female character. The framing device of the boy narrator reinforces the timelessness and universality of the grandmother's story, which is equally powerful to a young Indian boy in a small village and to adult readers around the world. As an old-fashioned storyteller, Narayan sought to convey the vitality of his native India, a land that is full of humanity, oddity, poverty, tradition, "inherited culture," picturesqueness. Narayan realized that the short story is the best medium for utilizing the wealth of subjects available. A novel is a different proposition altogether, centralized as it is on a major theme, leaving out, necessarily, a great deal of the available material on the periphery. Short stories, on the other hand, can cover a wider field by presenting concentrated miniatures of human experience in all its opulence. Narayan's concern was the heroic in the ordinary Indian. John Updike affirms that "all people are complex, surprising, and deserving of a break: this seems to me Narayan's moral, and one

1818390031

BA English

ENG 302 Introduction to Prose

hard to improve upon. His social range and his successful attempt to convey, in sum, an entire population shame most American authors, who also, it might be charged, ignore too much of what could be seen." With dignified simplicity, honesty, and sincerity, Narayan infused his stories with charm and spontaneous humor; his narrative voice guides the reader through his comic and ironic world with an unobtrusive wit.

R. K. Narayan reveals the Indian way of life and also the culture and tradition of India. R.K. Narayan has used typical Indian characters and Indian atmosphere to portray Indian culture. The main characters of this novel are Raju, Rosie and Marco. R.K. Narayan has given a true social picture of India through 'The Guide'. The traits of Indian manners and customs are also reflected in this novel. Hospitality of Indians is a well-known trait all over the world. Narayan has given a clear picture of India at the time of narration without idealizing the country and he has not also condemned it. The poverty of India has been reflected with a personal touch of the author. The villagers are shown as suffering from poverty and ignorance and their illiteracy has been reflected as the root cause for all their sufferings. There are as gullible and kind hearted as any Indian village habitats.

This is how R. K. Narayan represents Indian Society in his short stories.