

Beyond Political Independence: Postcolonial Critique in R.K. Narayan's Selected Novels

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ABSTRACT

The post-independence novels of R.K. Narayan (1906-2001) capture the fears, hopes, and complexities of a nation which is just emerging from its status as colony and coming into terms with its new identity and role. This study analyzes the post-independence novels of R.K. Narayan including *The Financial Expert*, *The Vendor of Sweets*, *The Painter of Signs*, and *Waiting for the Mahatma* through post-colonial theories in order to bring out the issues of freedom, identity, hybridity, the adaptation of the English language, and effects of westernization. The study uses historical contextualization to explain the socio-political context during the time of writing in relation to the post-independence novels of Narayan. The study shows that post-independence novels of R.K. Narayan exhibit the issues related to identity, cultural hybridity, and postcolonialism in an independent India.

Keywords: Freedom, identity, cultural hybridity, postcolonial, adaptation, nationalism.

INTRODUCTION

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayanaswami, better known as R. K. Narayan (1906 - 2001) illustrated the sociocultural dynamics of post-independence India with great sophistication through his novels. The period of post-independence in Indian literature is considered a period of considerable transformation due to the fact that this era signifies India's process of re-establishment following years of colonization. The period is thus considered a defining era of transformation both culturally and ideologically due to the challenges presented to the writers in terms of dealing with a free nation. The renowned authors from the epoch include R.K. Narayan who was particularly noted for his rich depiction of life in India. Narayan illustrates issues affecting the lives of common Indians in the backdrop of postcolonial India in his Malgudi novels.

Postcolonial literary theory involves an examination of the political, social, and historical implications of colonialism through literature and other related works of art. This theory analyzes the influence of colonialism on issues such as identity formation, language use, and narration, particularly in societies previously under colonial rule. This theory is associated with terms like hybridity, mimicry, resistance, otherness, and subalternity, which aid in identifying the reactions of colonized people against imperial discourses.

Literature has played a key role in this theory in that it enables the re-voicing of indigenous perspectives and questioning of Eurocentric ideologies. In addition to critiquing colonialist discourse, postcolonial literary theory seeks to understand the neocolonial forces at play in the modern global world. Major contributors to postcolonial literary theory include Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, among others (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989).

The present research seeks to perform a postcolonial critical approach towards R.K. Narayan's novels after the country's liberation. It tries to explore how these novels by the author portray the issues related to the theme of hybridity, resistance and colonial legacy. In this project, through textual analysis of books like *The Financial Expert* (1953), *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967), *The Painter of Signs* (1976) and *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955), among others, an attempt will be made to find out how he has tried to critique neo-colonialism in his narratives. Through the application of postcolonial theory on Narayan's novels, it will be attempted to understand his contribution towards the issue of nation formation and negotiation of culture.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Post-independence Indian literature provides an excellent ground for postcolonial studies. Many authors during that period found themselves struggling to reconcile their commitment to the values of tradition and modernity. One such author is R.K. Narayan, whose experience in pre- and post-independent India makes him an insightful commentator on the latter's social condition. Through his novels, we can see the influence of colonization on Indian culture, the changes in cultural values, and the emergence of Indian national identity. Thus, this literature review will focus on the academic debates surrounding his novels – *The Financial Expert* (1953), *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967), *The Painter of Signs* (1976) and *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955).

Meenakshi Mukherjee (1988) and Priyamvada Gopal (2009) have studied Narayan's fiction concerning postcolonial identity. Narayan's protagonists tend to face dilemmas of their loyalty to native cultural values and the invasion of western culture. The novel *The Financial Expert* portrays the protagonist Margayya's fascination for money as the combination of economic aspirations of the native community and capitalist ideology that was introduced by the colonialists. Additionally, the novel *The Painter of Signs* shows a battle between western rationalism and eastern mysticism, represented by the character of Raman.

Tradition versus modernity is the common theme of Narayan's fictional works. Narayan's critics like William Walsh (1971) and Harish Trivedi (1996) have commented on how Narayan's novels show the transformation of familial relations and cultural values. According to William Walsh, who in his book *R.K. Narayan: A Critical Appreciation* praises Narayan's talent to express the realities of Indian society through elegant writing. Walsh recognizes Narayan as one of the most significant writers of Indian English literature because of his unique literary style and creation of a mythical place called Malgudi, representing Indian society. Walsh views Narayan's work as exemplifying a "classical" balance between irony and empathy. He also offers deep insights into human behavior without blatant ideological claims. Harish Trivedi, another famous literary critic (1996), in his essays on postcolonial literature, explores Narayan's status in the canon of Indian literature written in English. Trivedi appreciates Narayan's critique of the modernity of the colonial era and his courage towards Western literature. Trivedi emphasizes that Narayan has successfully used English as an Indian language.

In *The Vendor of Sweets*, there is the depiction of intergenerational tension between Jagan and his son Mali, which reflects the larger transformation that takes place in post-independence India, whereby the younger generations have a tendency to embrace Western ideologies despite abandoning their native culture. According to Baskaran (2017), it appears that Narayan does not explicitly criticize colonialism in this story but implicitly criticizes its lasting influence through the use of irony and character. While Jagan maintains his connection to the Gandhian ideology, Mali's aspirations reflect the Westernization that took place during colonial rule. This story reflects the idea that going back to traditional practices cannot be fully possible since a balance needs to be struck between colonialism and the native culture.

Postcolonial readings of *The Financial Expert* bring to the fore the inequality that exists due to the legacies of the colonial era. Hybridity as outlined by Bhabha (1994) can be seen in the practices of Margayya, who works within and against the colonial ideologies that form part of the financial world. Just as Margayya's business in *The Financial Expert* is an example of indigenous economic resistance, so too is Jagan's small enterprise in *The Vendor of Sweets* a product of a postcolonial economy in the aftermath of colonial economic exploitation. As mentioned by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1989), even the English language used by Narayan becomes an example of postcolonial resistance through linguistic hybridity.

Many scholars, like C.D. Narasimhaiah (1973) and M.K. Naik (2002), have studied the way Narayan interacts with the spirit of India. While the research article focuses on this aspect, it brings out the manner in which Narayan writes about people facing the tension that exists between generations because of the dynamic nature of modern India. It is interesting to note that Narayan uses this tension as a recurring theme in all his novels written after the time of independence.

While there have been many analyses of the fiction of R. K. Narayan from a postcolonial perspective that have focused on issues of identity, culture versus modernity, and cultural hybridity, most of the literature tends to examine either particular works or certain thematic issues separately rather than taking the body of postcolonial writings as a whole. Furthermore, while previous literary criticism on R. K. Narayan has largely concentrated on his unique narrative techniques, cultural realism, and depiction of Indian society, few literary works have addressed his postcolonial critique of his novels written after India gained its independence.

Specifically, the issue of the limitations of political independence and how Narayan's selected post-independence novels reflect the continuing existence of various forms of colonialism through socio-cultural, economic, and psychological factors has not been explored enough in previous research despite the fact that there has been much discussion of issues like cultural hybridity and Westernization. The research article "Beyond Political Independence: Postcolonial Critique in R.K. Narayan's Selected Novels" provides an essential piece of information by discussing Narayan's novels using the postcolonial theoretical perspective. The study reveals new findings on freedom, identity, and nationalism as portrayed in Narayan's novels, especially in relation to his criticism of colonialism. Consequently, this paper attempts to explore this area further by analyzing *The Financial Expert*, *The Vendor of Sweets*, *The Painter of Signs*, and *Waiting for the Mahatma* in a comparative way in order to illustrate the limitations of political independence as freedom itself.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive approach based on postcolonial literary theory in analyzing and interpreting the selected works of Narayan post-independence period. The main objective is to investigate and critically examine the issues of freedom, identity, and culture in the selected works of R. K. Narayan. In doing so, the researcher focuses on the complexity of life in postcolonial India as depicted in his selected novels.

The research methodology employed in this study entails close reading as the primary data collection tool. Close reading involves careful examination of text to explore narrative patterns, character development, themes, symbols, and language features in the texts analyzed. The selected novels for analysis include *The Financial Expert* (1953), *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955), *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967), and *The Painter of Signs* (1976).

Close reading is complemented by the use of some theoretical perspectives in postcolonial literary criticism such as Orientalism by Edward Said, Bhabha's hybridity and mimicry, and subalternity by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak.

In addition, the research uses a comparative analysis that helps in highlighting commonalities and contrasts between the selected novels in order to explore common themes and changing representations of post-independence problems. The research also involves the use of a historical and contextual analysis which helps in analyzing the literary works from the point of view of social and political issues of post-independent India.

This research explores Narayan's novels written after post-independence reflecting socio-cultural transformation in India following decolonization. The selected novels include: *The Financial Expert* (1953), *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967), *The Painter of Signs* (1976) and *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955). Through this combination of approaches, it is possible to conduct a detailed analysis of Narayan's criticism of political independence.

FINDINGS

Narayan's novels demonstrate that despite political independence, people were still subjected to various difficulties since true freedom was lacking at personal, social, and cultural levels. In fact, in Narayan's stories, people are trapped in a society which is tormented by its traditions, impacts of colonialism, and internal inconsistencies that prevent the society from developing further.

In his novel *The Painter of Signs*, Narayan describes conflicts of ideas associated with changes in the role of women and introduction of new social reforms. In *The Vendor of Sweets*, generational conflict becomes central since the author reveals cultural problems connected with the influence of Western values on Indians.

In *The Financial Expert*, Narayan critically evaluates capitalism and consumerism resulting from the establishment of colonial economies, which continue affecting people's behavior. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* deals with the problem of political and ethical conflict illustrated by the protagonist Sriram, who faces contradictions between idealized views and harsh realities of the society.

Finally, Narayan comes to a conclusion that political freedom of the nation has been examined by Narayan within the larger context of moral and spiritual growth, asking if independence could lead to emancipation without ethical change.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The post-independence novels by R.K. Narayan provide an insightful study into India's post-independence experiences after securing political freedom. The study and analysis of Narayan's post-independence novels shall analyze the dynamic interrelation between individual identity and collective consciousness within the backdrop of post-colonialism. Through the thematic analysis of themes such as cultural hybridity, the quest for agency, and restructuring of social institutions, it is hoped that the analysis would reveal the way in which Narayan's characters and narratives capture the experience of the Indian nation during its post-independence journey. At the same time, this study would also examine the way in which Narayan critiques the constraints inherent in the concept of freedom devoid of significant socio-economic transformation.

The Financial Expert (1953)

In R.K. Narayan's novel, *The Financial Expert*, one can trace a deep analysis of the post-colonial India, where the idea of liberty contrasts with financial aspirations. The focal point in this story is Margaya, who is completely immersed in financial matters. For him, the power of finance is the key that opens many doors and lifts him above the social boundaries created by other people. His career as an ordinary financial expert rapidly turns into more ambitious plans based on his conviction that being financially independent means being absolutely free and sovereign. However, his pride does not hide his insecurity, which has been inherent in his family for generations. It developed under colonialism when only the rich could have privileges and power.

After the colonial era, Indians become more modern with their changing values and expectations. The character Margaya is depicted as a financial advisor to the peasantry. He is being tested by the secretary of the bank, who is a European. His message to his customers is that they need to behave in civilized manners if they were to survive in this era. Being civilized meant having all that the colonizers had such as money, owning a car, sending a son to a convent school, and spending time with the children of the District Collector or the Superintendent of Police. This kind of behavior, where one accepts all sorts of products and values, creates room for one to be an agent of colonization. If an Indian accepted the Europeans as a measure of being civilized, he was colonized.

While it is true that the new nation state needs to deal with the outside world, there arises the query as to whether they need to do so through the colonial banking system that is a capitalist system in itself, and another instrument of imperialism as the right path for the Indians. At this juncture, Narayan brings out the culmination of his thought process. The metamorphosis of Margayya symbolizes the change undergone by India as well in its move towards sovereignty. He works within the financial system, exploits gaps in the rules, and constructs his empire based on ideas that continue to carry the vestiges of colonial institutions.

But at the same time, the life path of Margayya could not remain unopposed. The man's passion for money makes him unable to understand the essence of freedom. Consequently, his work and private life begin suffering because his morals are distorted until the time when he becomes entrapped by the system he wanted to control in the first place. In the end, failure comes inevitably as his kingdom falls apart and his powers are diminished, giving him an opportunity to comprehend the essence of real freedom. That freedom cannot be purchased at any price. Narayan's book gives the audience a better insight into the real world of postcolonial India. Although the

country had already declared independence from the colonial era of the British, there was still a trace of the old ideology in the minds of the Indians.

References to the British rule in India have been made minimally within the *Financial Expert*. However, wherever we find, the traces of the changes being made to the society through modernization are apparent (Fakrul, 1998). Regarding the society depicted, this novel talks about a society which is undergoing a lot of change in its last period of British rule characterized by widespread corruption among the merchants and social workers, fraud among army contractors as well as druggists who stocked goods to show a fake scarcity and sold them at high prices. The idea of being anti-colonial is used for safeguarding the interests of some classes in particular. George Woodcock (1958) questions whether modern India can reject westernization, with its political and ultimately moral implications. The only way to attempt this, Narayan suggests, is by withdrawing into one of the two Indian worlds that remained relatively untouched by the intrusion of the Raj and the influences that have survived it.

For Narayan, such withdrawal does not serve as a pathway to transformation, but it always serves as a means to self-discovery." According to Meenakshi Mukherjee, Narayan's novels deal with the problem of modern India coping with the process of Westernization, not only politically, but morally and culturally. According to her observations, Narayan is neither for nor against modernity, but rather depicts how Indians cope with it, usually through the act of retreat into a more conventional world. While Narayan does portray the freedom that comes with Independence, he also illustrates the group of people who seek to use it for themselves.

Lastly, *The Financial Expert* does not provide a conformist resolution for the main character, but rather leaves an important question unanswered—is India truly free from its colonial past, or is the quest for success just a mask hiding its traumatic past? Margayya's story proves once again that freedom cannot simply be political; it is the search for oneself. According to Alam. F. (1998), *The Financial Expert* has an indigenous frame in that Narayan wants to prove through his story that according to the scripture, it was impossible for a person seeking success in life to depend on both the goddess of wisdom, Saraswati, and the goddess of wealth, Lakshmi, together. However, Narayan looks at the religious tradition from an enigmatic point of view; in the story, the protagonist becomes rich after he follows the absurd instructions given to him by a priest who might or might not be a conman, and worships Lakshmi.

The Painter of Signs (1976)

In Narayan's *The Painter of Signs* (1976), which happens to be his last novel, the novelist focuses on themes associated with the colonial past of India and its postcolonial situation especially on the conflict between tradition and modernity in India. The story revolves around two main characters Raman, who is a sign painter, and Daisy, a very strong-willed woman who fights for the cause of family planning. There is a great deal more going on in the lives of both Raman and Daisy; there are conflicts between freedom and society, and Western progress and deep-rooted tradition. Daisy gives up her personal life for the sake of serving the nation through family planning and sees it as her military responsibility. The fight against overpopulation of India after its independence can be seen as an extension of its modernization process; especially regarding family planning, which was popularized after the Second World War.

The depiction of Daisy by Narayan shows his point of view concerning the shifting status of women in India after the colonial era. In contrast to characters such as Savitri and Bharati found in his other novels, Daisy shows her independence by standing up against Raman and making her decisions herself. This act of bravery not only reflects the actions of the character herself, but also the author's willingness to make a risky plot decision. Moreover, Daisy's defiance can be understood as a criticism of cultural fundamentalism, and how the place of women in society has shifted from purely domestic areas to social and public ones. Nonetheless, Narayan recognizes that while these changes are happening, tradition still plays an integral part in the culture of India. The ideology of Raman and Daisy is an issue of gender politics and social reforms in the postcolonial context. By creating the character of Daisy as well as her independent counterpart Raman, the author explores how the issues of gender relations change as people come to terms with change. By being a woman of progress who supports and propagates birth control and social reforms, Daisy defies the traditional patriarchy that is the hallmark of the postcolonial situation. As Daisy is a government employee working for family planning, and as

Raman is uncomfortable with her aggressive attitude, the novel depicts a changing society where women start challenging the traditional patriarchal framework.

It should be noted that Narayan is not opposed to the transformation processes of society. Instead, he shows that the transformation of society and the consciousness of its citizens may be not only inevitable but also beneficial. Narayan does not take any stance on the debated ideas of the postcolonial Indians' identity in his novels, which makes him write about history with great objectivity. Thus, *The Painter of Signs* becomes part of postcolonial literature, showing the interconnection between gender politics and the evolution of society within the story of decolonization. Therefore, the postcolonialism of Narayan surpasses the scope of nationalism. Narayan's characters reveal the inner life of society as it tries to find ways to connect with its past and prepare for the future.

The Vendor of Sweets (1977)

The story by R.K Narayan called *The Vendor of Sweets* takes place in an independent India where the impacts of the colonial era can be seen on the basis of the conflict between two generations, change in the cultural values and difficulty in achieving economic independence. Indeed, the main character of the novel who displays his disobedience to the colonial language and culture believes in having his own culture while searching for restoring the traditional one. All in all, the discussion of the linguistic problem presented in the novel indicates the role of English as a colonial language in India and its impact on the Indian culture.

Jagan's position is paradoxical since his love for his possessions is well-founded since his treasures bear signatures from an Englishman. Additionally, his instinctual love towards the statue of Frederic Lawley is another proof of that. It appears that Jagan himself is unable to conform with the traditions of Hinduism. This position of Jagan creates enmity with his sisters and hence, Jagan is considered to be hybrid because of the fact that he was born in a colonial atmosphere. Jagan's position is such that if things are not changed from one generation to another, nothing else would take place. Even though he talks in this manner, Jagan could not overcome his ideological thinking. Jagan, in his position, could neither have pure Indian Hindu nor Western culture, despite the fact that he adopted a foreign culture either consciously or unconsciously. It is not that Jagan did not want his son to become famous in the whole world.

The illusions about the presence of the British in India can be found in *The Vendor of Sweets*; however, most of what is shown in this novel pertains to changes in society and people due to the Empirical Rule prevailing in India for more than two centuries. As is inevitable, it is clear that there are traditions of the common man pitted against the Western culture that is disrupting them. Jagan, Mali's father finds himself as a traditional Indian as well as an orthodox Hindu when he finds his son to be imbued with Western modernity. Only through his inward change does Jagan go to America with a Korean-American lady, Grace.

The father Jagan stands for the deep-seated cultural traditions of India, whereas his son Mali stands for the tide of Western influence that has started sweeping through the newly liberated India. While Jagan adheres to Gandhian values of simplicity and spirituality, as well as to the theory of self-sufficiency that was once at the core of Indian nationalism, Mali is more interested in introducing Western technology into the country's literature and culture. Here, we see a reflection of the larger conflict in post-colonial literature, where the country gains independence from the colonizer but remains caught between the two choices—whether to move forward with their indigenous traditions or redefine themselves according to the globalized world. It seems that the problem of national identity has only been magnified by the country's newfound independence.

Jagan runs his business on the foundations of simplicity and self-reliance. He adheres to the philosophy of using natural methods and healing. In addition, he follows the Gandhian economics that encourage small-scale, ethical business dealings. However, with Mali coming up with concepts for industrializing literature, one can see how far removed conventional economic systems are from capitalist pursuits. The emergence of industrialization and technology, together with capitalist endeavors, were, to a large extent, an extension of colonial policies that focused on making profits and advancing materially rather than culturally. Using Jagan and Mali as examples, Narayan criticizes the assumption that freedom necessarily brings empowerment.

The internal conflict of Jagan reveals the impact of colonial rule on the psyche of its people. His struggle to live according to the principles of Gandhi, be self-reliant, and be immune to the influence of the modern world indicates his constant fear whether independence has really liberated the Indian soul or substituted another form of oppression for the former one. His failure to combine the desires of his son and his own beliefs reveals the problems of a man living in a society torn between the traditions of colonialism and the need to develop an indigenous identity. Mali, however, symbolizes the alienation of the youth from the oppression caused by colonialism. He finds the past irrelevant in pursuing his dreams of success based on the Western standards of progress.

The fact that Mali marries a girl from a different culture will be the beginning of the process of hybridity. It will be easy for him to embrace the situation, but not for his father. Mali stands for modernity since his brain has been washed by the presence of Western modernity. He feels that his culture is not better than that of America. While Jagan embraces his own Indian myths, customs, and rituals before Grace, Mali finds him in the shock of encountering the new world – a world where none of the old values like marriage and morality have any importance left. Here comes another tragicomedy of generations. Importantly, in this regard, Jagan shows great sympathy for Grace and is willing to accept her as his Indian bride until he learns that Mali refused to marry her.

Through the book, the clash of the two cultures has been highlighted through contrasts. However, because of the influence of foreign culture, Indian culture has been affected, and thus, a cultural and ideological conflict can be seen between two generations. As a result, they become in such a situation that they cannot revert to their traditional beliefs and culture anymore. According to Nupur Sangwan, “In his later writings, such as *The Vendor of Sweets* (1967), Narayan ponders upon the disillusionment that comes after independence. In the novel, he explores the dilemma of tradition versus the forces of modernization, exemplified by Jagan, who is a vendor of sweets. Jagan is disturbed by his son’s attempt to adopt the Western way of living and thereby brings out the clash of generations within society.”

The Vendor of Sweets by Narayan does not provide any simple solution to the issue of postcolonial freedom. Rather, it depicts the challenges of identity, economy, and mental liberation within an independent country. According to the novel, freedom cannot be understood solely from the standpoint of being free from the colonizer; freedom should also imply a person’s capacity to liberate him/her from all other forms of domination, such as the influence of capitalism or traditional values. In conclusion, the novel *The Vendor of Sweets* by Narayan prompts its readers to contemplate the essence of independence and ask whether it is rooted in tradition, modernity, or something in between.

Waiting for the Mahatma (1955)

Waiting for the Mahatma (1955) explicitly depicts the deep and unavoidable repercussions of colonialism, especially the colonialism of Britain in India where there have been many changes. The act of resistance was also experienced by the colonized group while it highlights the non-violence campaign of Mahatma Gandhi in relation to the independence of India. The story is considered to be the most politically motivated literary work by R.K. Narayan and it is also the most detailed description of the era before India gained its freedom. The book was created eight years after India obtained its freedom and the story revolves around the past history of India and mixes both real and fictitious characters as in historical novels. The novel effectively captures the contribution of the Indian people during their fight for independence. At the same time, it also touches on the consequences of this movement. To realize this goal, Narayan uses the main character, Sriram who takes the lead in seeking out the Gandhian activist, Bharati. The progressive responses, the violent programs against British rule, Subas Bose's program for the National Army, the independence itself, the partition of India, the chaos, and the assassination of Gandhi follow up the plot of the novel.

However, Narayan does not position himself in opposition to the colonial struggle; instead, he presents people involved in such struggles through subtle nuances in his texts. The author highlights the clash between Sriram and an activist from the Quit India movement. Such clash allows comprehending the purpose of writing this novel by Narayan. The point is that Narayan wants to show how huge the issue was, and how much Indians were going to shed their blood to achieve the independence. It seems like Narayan considers Gandhi's tragedy to be

in the fact that Gandhi is so superior to his followers. In particular, the latter is shown in the text as a great leader with principles, who realized that for Indians to become independent, they should change completely.

While it was his love for Bharati that motivated Sriram, the central character of the novel, to join the movement led by Gandhi, he ends up indulging himself in acts of violence and transforms himself into an activist of Subhas Chandra Bose's movement to fight against the British through violent means. He continues to do this until he is arrested by the police and incarcerated in prison. The era of British rule finally came to its end. However, the expectations were higher compared to before, but the supporters got a shock when the reality turned out to be opposite of their expectations. Indeed, while there have been changes, but these were even worse than those before.

However, the point here is that the representative Indian, who is easily ridded of the past of the British and quickly taken by the Indian present, is far from being prepared for India, with still long ways to take before him. Indeed, when listening to Gandhi's lectures in the novel, we hear the great man lecture about non-violence, freedom, love to the motherland, about leading the truth-seeking life without any pretense, and about living independently relying on oneself. The reader becomes convinced in Gandhi's words by observing how he himself practices these words in his life, calling the people of India to live without any prejudices towards other people and showing love to everybody around him. Many changes occur in Sriram in the novel. His animosity to the British grows more and more. On some occasion, Sriram gets into a fight with a shopkeeper trying to force him to remove all the English goods sold in his shop. On another occasion, he engages himself in a dispute with an English planter unwilling to leave India. The disputes, especially with the Englishman, show us the hatred of Indians, generally, and Sriram, in particular, to the British.

Sriram is depicted in part three of *Waiting for the Mahatma* under the influence of Jagadish, a Malgudi photographer. Sriram's approach involves crippling the British in India through warfare against the colonizers. This is done by attacking the courts, schools, government buildings, railways, and other such establishments. Jagadish, on the other hand, follows Subhas Bose and the Indian Army, which was said to have captured Indians that had by now abandoned Gandhism and looked for the quickest way to gain freedom through bloodshed.

In trying to organize meetings inside the jail, Sriram also tries to motivate people in becoming a part of an anti-British movement while inside the prison. There are many people who seem indifferent about joining this kind of movement since the reader learns from the response of the prisoner members in jail after receiving the invite from Sriram into the anti-British movement. However, Sriram himself prefers taking the violent route instead of the nonviolent approach towards attaining independence. The independence, followed by events in history, are not unnoticed by Narayan when he brings up matters such as Muslim and Hindu riots and the eventual partitioning of India. One clear indication of the horror caused by the latter is the news of religious riots occurring throughout the country that is relayed to Sriram. Therefore, this marks the last chapter of the story when Gandhi was assassinated.

Nevertheless, briefly, Narayan's depiction of reality through the portrayal of the activities of Indians in *Waiting for the Mahatma* is characterized by the particularity of the "Quit India Movement" and Gandhi's Non-violent Movement. As such, this historical novel does not disappoint readers in its representation of the involvement of the Indians in the Nationalist movement and resistance, as much as they could. At the same time, Narayan shows the fragmentation of people in relation to these matters, which remains the same. The historical novel "Waiting for the Mahatma" is the only work by Narayan where he portrays Gandhi's Satyagraha and other political movements, and the post-colonial responsibility of this kind.

Sentiments of different people tend to act differently. For Gopad, for instance, it would be relatively easier to engage in violence since he has lost his dear father among others to the colonial authority. Non-violent resistance may not come out naturally for him but Sriram can join such a movement without much difficulty since there exists some conflict within him. However, apart from that, it is often evident how Indian Muslims and fanatics Hindus fight each other leading to an interminable battle between the two rivals. This, in turn, creates confusion and chaos in the entire society due to division among the common masses. There exist numerous clashes with Britishers leading to different forms of resistance movements which result in fragmented society. Under these

political and social circumstances, it is hard to obtain the fruits of independence for sure. The same happens when there is colonialism.

On the contrary, Narayan depicts the end of Waiting for the Mahatma through the murder of Gandhi who dies before being assassinated. The whole process of building up the nation and its future is seen in his acts. He considers the youths of India whether Hindu or Muslim, the 'flowers of India.' We can assume that Bharati, the representative of the innumerable women, who can keep the mission alive, had joined Gandhi's non-violence movement and had advanced it, is going to take over the task of nation-building by looking after the orphan children who were the victims of riots and political clashes.

CONCLUSION

In *The Financial Expert*, *The Vendor of Sweets*, *The Painter of Signs* and *Waiting for the Mahatma*, R.K. Narayan underscores the intricacies involved in the processes of individual and social change in the wake of post-coloniality, whereby economic ambitions, cultural clashes, and moral quandaries mold identities. Narayan's skillful narration reveals an introspective commentary on autonomy, reminding us that the essence of freedom lies in far more than political liberation but in economic independence, cultural accommodation, and moral integrity. Economic yearnings, cultural discord, and moral ambiguities are precisely the silent revolutions at play here, where freedom is more than politics but a process of constant negotiation with oneself and others. The psychological landscapes of his characters are reflective of the fractured realities of post-colonial existence, wherein traces of the colonial past persist as well as struggles toward cultural renewal. Narayan does not succumb to easy oppositions of East against West and tradition against modernity in favor of providing complex portrayals of the human condition in a transitional era. Ultimately, however, the narratives challenge their audiences to rethink what is necessary to achieve true freedom. Narayan's narratives, therefore, transcend the immediate socio-political milieu and speak to a universal condition of postcolonial modernity: the quest for meaning in a world where freedom is not an endpoint but an evolving and elusive ideal.

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