

A Critical Glance on Narayan’s Rosie and Hardy’s Lucetta

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ABSTRACT

In British Literature, Hardy’s novels are typically marked for the blend of the Victorian and modern trends and characters. In the Indian English literary scenario too, we find the works of Narayan, whose plots are significantly an intermingle of the two changing generations – the pre and post independent Indian societies. Apart from being the designers of their own worlds – the Wessex and Malgudi, they have highlighted the struggles, the innovations and the changing cultures of their respective societies. One such change which is explicit is the emergence of the modern woman in their narratives. This paper aims to highlight the portrayal of the modern sovereign woman of the two societies, taking Hardy’s Lucetta and Narayan’s Rosie as the representatives.

Keywords:

Wessex; Malgudi; independent; new woman

A work of creative imagination, such as a novel, evokes in the minds of the readers, emotional responses with which they dive deeper into the depths of that imaginative world and feel the incidences and characters are living right before them. There lies the genius of the world of art and two such men who excel in this creativity is the Wessex architect – Thomas Hardy and the Indian Malgudi craftsman – R. K. Narayan.

The Wessex of Thomas Hardy was a patriarchal society, dominated by the egos, the passions and the victories of the Victorian men. It was a society that presented inconceivable sufferings of

women. The three major women characters, presented by Hardy in his famous novel *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, namely, Susan Henchard, Elizabeth Jane Newson, and Lucetta Templeman, all are inevitable victims of fate and male dominance. A similar glimpse is found in the social system of R. K. Narayan’s Malgudi, where every woman character strives hard to free herself from the firm authority of patriarchal dominance. She is traditional in her upbringing but nevertheless independent in her spirit, which is what we associate with the female character of Rosie in Narayan’s *The Guide*.

Analysis

In the novels of both these writers, we find similarities with regards to say, the constant struggle between the budding modern urban culture and the traditional ancient setup, in portraying human relationships. The similarity is more prominently evident in their presentation of women characters, who win over the hurdles of the orthodox beliefs of the patriarchal society and live their aspirations. Both Narayan's Rosie and Hardy's Lucetta mirror this image of the emerging woman of their respective cultures. Hardy, in this regard, is well-known for presenting the "new woman" in most of his novels and keeping in line with this statement, we find Lucetta in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* qualifies to be one of them.

On the other hand, the character of Rosie is portrayed as a typical Indian woman, who sacrifices all her passions for dance, humbly accepting the decision of her husband, Marco. Marco dislikes that art of dance, which is the reason for Rosie's existence. Though accepting her husband's decision and giving up her dancing career, breaks her from within, Rosie accepts her fate and surrenders to it. This is the same level of acceptance and surrender to fate that we see when Lucetta is rejected by Henchard in marriage and as compensation a token of financial assistance is handed over to her. Neither Rosie nor Lucetta react against their

fates but bow their heads down before it, considering it to be their destiny.

Both Lucetta and Rosie are the new women of passion and symbols of endeavors. They are not frightened to face their destiny, whether perilous or fruitful. They accept every challenge that comes in their way, boldly and surmount them. Nevertheless, they are highly passionate about accomplishing their dreams, that of becoming a famous Bharatnatyam dancer for Rosie and of becoming the prestigious wife of the Mayor of the city of Casterbridge for Lucetta, which they truly succeed in achieving by triumphing over all the hurdles.

Though initially they appear dependent on a male counterpart in their respective lives but eventually it comes across that they are always bold enough to reach to their zeniths, all by themselves. The male counterparts are just the ladder that they needed to climb on to reach to the summit that they longed for. Once they have firmly gripped the strand, they cling on to it to reach up to the apex. Lucetta, despite facing repeated threats from Henchard, for not accepting his marriage proposal, appears bold and intelligent enough to secretly marry Farfare in another city of Port Bredy. Similarly, once Rosie rises to become a famous dancer, there is no looking back for

her. So when Raju is imprisoned for forging Rosie's signatures on the documents sent by Marco for Rosie to sign, Rosie is left all alone to face the hardships of the world, which she does with courage and confidence. She dances with perfection day and night, not only as an inborn dancer but also with equal success manages all her contacts and the schedules of performances, which are earlier administered by Raju. Thus, emerges the daring, self-governing, independent, accomplished dancer, Nalini.

However, in spite of being audacious, Lucetta is the symbol of 'greed', which tempts her to win over the better prospect, Farfare, and reject Henchard. Henchard had abandoned Lucetta for Susan earlier, but Lucetta still wants to be the wife of the Mayor, Michael Henchard. Thus, following Susan's death, she skillfully plans to win over Henchard's affections to be the wife of the Mayor. She offers Elizabeth a shelter at her residence and uses her as a bridge to reach to Henchard.

However, on finding a better prospect in Farfare, she uses her serpent's charms to win over Farfare's affections for herself. It is by captivating Farfare and pulling him away from Elizabeth, that Lucetta behaves like the 'serpent girl' "Rosie" of R. K. Narayan's novel, *The Guide*. In Narayan's *The Guide*, the character of Rosie is referred to as the

'serpent girl' by the villagers of Raju's rural community because the villagers thought that she, using her charms, eroded away Raju's relations from his loved ones and so also his career. Rosie, thus, acted as the 'serpent girl' in the life of Raju and detached him from his mother, for whom her only son and hope, Raju, has been taken away. Thus, in a similar way, in Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Lucetta, becomes the 'serpent girl', in Elizabeth's life, from which Farfare has been snatched away.

It is certain that Lucetta neither loved Henchard nor she could truly love Farfare. If she would have loved Henchard truly, she would have never left him for Farfare. Secondly, her emotions for Farfare are also not genuine, else she would not have kept her past relationship with Henchard a secret from Farfare, being afraid that Farfare would abandon her, if he is told the truth about it. Her nervous breakdown, anticipating her abandonment by Farfare, is a proof sufficient that she does not feel secured in her relationship with Farfare. These fears in Lucetta's heart proved that her love towards Farfare was not strong enough to stand the test of the society. Rosie, on her part, though is said to be a traditional woman of values and morals, her morality becomes void when she is inclined towards Raju and develops an illicit relationship with him. Again, her

morality can be questioned when she prefers to stay with Raju in his home in the village, following her abandonment by Marco. Had she been a woman full of ethics, she would have preferred to go back to her husband or at least lived with dignity in Raju's village. Thus, neither Narayan's Rosie nor Hardy's Lucetta, are women of principles and poise.

Moreover, the base of their new relationships with their respective male counterparts is rather weak and not strongly built, as on one hand, where Lucetta hides about her past relationship with Henchard from Farfare; on the other, Rosie's relationship with Raju is also weak and parasitic in nature. Rosie feels that she needs Raju's presence in her life to flourish in her dance profession and as such, she tolerates all his nuisances. On the other side of their relationship stands the ill-mannered Raju, who lives the most luxurious life that is affordable on the hard-earned money of Rosie. Besides, Rosie is never emotionally bound to her husband, Marco and nor is he to her.

Thus, these women could neither understand their partners' poignant pain nor had the emotional bond to explicitly speak the truth to the other. Honest relationships cannot be built on secret and false basis nor can genuine relations be built by guilty souls, as is evident in the cases of Hardy's Lucetta

and Narayan's Rosie.

Conclusion

As such, it is evident that the evil attitudes are hard-ingrained in the hearts of both - the Victorian women of Hardy's Wessex, and also that of the women folk of Malgudi which ultimately affects their personal and social lives. It is also true that there are malicious intentions on part of both Rosie and Lucetta but they both are women with independent thoughts and lofty ambitions. They represent those struggling women of these societies, who despite being surrounded by the prevailing evils, in and around, paved a way out to act and surpass the constraining factors.

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