

Reflections on Psychological and Spiritual Perspectives of Adults and Children in the Selected Works by R.K. Narayan

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Abstract

R.K. Narayan's fiction addresses the psychological and spiritual aspects of adults and children, analyzing their worldviews and misconceptions. Children's innocence, curiosity, and pure perspective make it hard for them to understand adults' duty-bound worldview. Adults' cultural expectations and obligations prevent them from appreciating children's simplicity and imagination. Narayan's characters particularly in *Malgudi Days*, explore destiny, religion, and self-discovery, emphasizing the universal necessity of spirituality in attaining inner peace and harmony. Narayan discreetly promotes mutual respect, emotional connection, and a better understanding of life's purpose by harmonizing psychological and spiritual viewpoints, creating unity, compassion, and societal peace. In R.K. Narayan's works, spirituality is an interior journey of self-awareness, moral growth, and transcendence that helps people discover significance beyond material concerns. It goes beyond religion to a better knowledge of oneself, others, and life. In *The Guide*, Raju transforms from a materialistic tour guide to a selfless spiritual figure, and in *The Vendor of Sweets*, Jagan embraces Gandhian simplicity to find inner peace. In *Swami and Friends* and *The Bachelor of Arts*, young protagonists undergo psychological and spiritual journeys that shape their identities. Narayan emphasizes the importance of spirituality in fostering harmony, wisdom, and emotional balance, which leads to personal fulfillment and social welfare. The disparity between the views of youth and adults will diminish, enhancing comprehension, which is the primary objective of this research. Selected psychological theories and spiritual knowledge have been provided within a global framework for the advancement of mankind. Enhanced mutual understanding of psychology among humans will foster harmony and illuminate humanity.

Keywords: Adults; Behavioral pattern; Children; Healthy Relationship; Human psyche; Stress.

Introduction

The research paper intends to shed light on the lives of human beings with a vision to enrich human values, wellness for humanity, prosperity, happiness, spirituality, and the overall self-positive development of an individual so that harmony, peace, knowledge, prosperity, and love may be given to the world as a gift. In the era of technology, globalization, materialism, and post-modernism, we have observed a significant shift in human society away from fundamental values. In the present scenario, humans are so confined to materialistic possessions, owing to which they have become self-occupied and have been away from self-finding and recognition. However, despite the remarkable advancements humanity has made through the development of machines, certain studies indicate that humans have not yet achieved the intellectual rest that is essential for health and a fulfilling life. (Alex Bierman 2006). Similar to this, with the scientific evolution of contemporary civilization, humankind's psychological troubles and turmoil—for example, distress, challenges, confusion, disorder, divorce, failure, addiction, and suicides—are greater than before. (Mojtaba Aghili and Rostam Aliniya 2012). Therefore, unpleasant events have become more prevalent, and the health of the soul and strength are under greater threat than in the past. The stage of adulthood is a significant part of an individual's evolution. It incessantly brings changes to an adult's persona, such as physically, mentally, and psychologically. (John W. Santrock 2020).

Grown-up children who experience less well-being in psychology could experience lower levels of satisfaction, happiness, and self-esteem. It causes them to have a high level of depression. (Paul R. Amato 1994). According to R.K. Narayan, in *Malgudi days*, stress is always fatal. In the story, "Iswaran" due to his failures in his studies, was considered dumb and thick-skinned. Everyone behind him, including the entire family and the town, was laughing. He used to go to the cinema to hide his face from his friends and other people. He became increasingly frustrated by their satire and comments. He felt very depressed and unhappy. He felt an utter distaste for himself, and finally he ended his life by committing suicide. In the story, "Second Opinion" the boy and his mother were totally poles apart. The boy wished his mother would motivate him to pursue what he wanted or what could help him according to his interests, but the mother considered him a loser and irresponsible.

R.K. Narayan, in his famous novel, *The Guide* (1958), stressed self-realization by stating that it was the best measure to find happiness and peace

in one's mind and life. Raju is deeply troubled by his past life. He realized his goodness and skills. He addressed his followers about life and eternity by enlightening them. R. K. Narayan's novels, reflecting on life and the vitality and vivacity of a full-blooded life, mesmerized him with his own voice and spiritual knowledge. Narayan found special importance in the spiritual side of human identity because it gave him strength and comfort after his wife died. After her death, he felt he connected with her in a telepathic way. When she told him she existed in a better, more refined spiritual state, the sadness of losing her transformed into a kind of spiritual joy.

This helped him cope with his loss and renewed his creative energy. Today, organizations consider a human resource as their primary asset and unrivaled competitive advantage, and they recognize a healthy individual as the key to the nation's advancement. Furthermore, a society's healthy mindsets serve as the benchmarks for its mental health, with joy serving as a gauge of mental well-being. Considering these facts, an individual's life typically experiences numerous ups and downs, including fear, happiness, sorrows, strain, work pressure, conflicts, egos, expectations, disputes, joy, depression, addiction, competitions, loneliness, separation, pain, grief, ecstasy, dissatisfaction, and more. It totally depends on humans to meticulously control such factors in their lives. (Tayebe Majidia and Parivash Jafarib 2012). Nagaraj experienced significant unease and disturbance when confronted by Gopu regarding investigations into Tim's clandestine activities. His discomfort intensified when he learned that his father had revealed Tim's decision to halt his college education. At that moment, Nagaraj found thoroughly disheartened, grappling with the realization that responding to such uncomfortable questions presented a considerable challenge. (Gabriel Karthick K 2020).

Different people approach these factors in their lives in different ways, but the question remains: are all individuals aware of the appropriate methods to control these factors? If this is the case, what are the effective life mantras that lead to a healthy lifestyle, which everyone aspires to but struggles to implement? In order to find out the key to happiness in life, it is important to understand certain significant aspects of life, such as spirituality, religion, karma, and lifestyle, which give indications of one or the other way to lead a prosperous life and how to manage one's life. According to Mc Ewan, spirituality is defined as the spread of awareness about life that allows all human beings to reflect on life, such as, who we are, what our purpose is, and where we come from. Furthermore, Bagheri Fariborsa, Akbarizadeh Fatemeh, and Hatami Hamidreza (2010) stated

that there has been vagueness between the terms religion and spirituality. People often understand both terms as interchangeable without knowing the facts. It is explained as knowledge. However, a religion is considered, prescribed, structured, and connected, along with customs, rituals, and a system of belief. It is a matter of choice for an individual how he or she manages life and what elements of it he or she follows to give life meaning. Therefore, it is essential to understand what life requires and how to lead a prosperous life.

The intelligence of spirituality integrates the concepts of spirituality and intelligence into a single, up-to-date concept, while intelligence is what fully formulates it and bestows unity. Spiritual intelligence includes a variety of methods that coordinate with life itself and the power of outer life. Further, spiritual intelligence leads to cheerfulness and improves the quality of life. (Frances Vaughan 2002).

Purpose

The purpose of this research paper is to unite individuals of varying age groups by examining the psychological and spiritual dimensions of adults and children in R.K. Narayan's works via the lens of certain psychological theories and spiritual intelligence. Understanding each other's feelings, problems, and points of view makes it easier to understand and avoid arguments. Narayan's stories show how innocent children are and how responsible adults are, which promotes respect and understanding between people. Realizing these points of view helps people grow emotionally, be more patient and compassionate, which leads to a more peaceful society overall. This study improves relationships by reducing misunderstandings and recognizing the worth of every stage of life. It also works to create a world where children and adults can live together with knowledge, care, and shared human values.

On the other hand, spiritual intelligence is also a way for self- introspection as the world is aware of the contrast between spiritualism and materialism, as well as its impact. People have questioned materialism and established spiritualism in opposition to materialism, while Swami Vivekananda considered spirituality and materialism not as opposing forces, but as complementary ones. (Kristin Hansen Lagattuta and Hannah J. Kramer 2021). He posed the question of the physical body and the soul and answered that western philosophy of materialism was necessary to feed the body and Indian spirituality was necessary to feed the soul. Swami Vivekananda gave importance to both materialism and spiritu-

alism in his philosophy. For those who view spirituality as a means of evading responsibilities, Swami Vivekananda emphasized that prioritizing spiritual liberty over social liberty should be viewed as a defect, and vice versa, as a greater sin.

People believe that spirituality necessitates renunciation, and spiritual awakening is impossible without it. Prasoon Tripathi (2017) mentioned in his research paper that some people give up worldly things for spiritual reasons, seeking peace or finding peace itself. They may appear detached from the present, yet they maintain a connection to eternity. However, Chandran's renunciation in the novel was different from that in, *The Bachelor of Arts* by R.K. Narayan. Chandran renounced instead of committing suicide because he lacked the courage. It was his way of getting back at society, circumstances, and maybe even fate.

In Narayan's life as well, 1939 marked the beginning of a tumultuous period spanning over five years, during which the novelist endured adversity and emerged a transformed individual. Narayan's early struggle reached its worst crisis. Decades later, he recounted to Ved Mehta in New York, 'I lost my anchorage'. For a temperament as intense as Narayan's, the loss was traumatic. Decades later, R.K. Laxman recalled vividly his elder brother's grief: He couldn't write, he couldn't think, he couldn't sit, he cried. Narayan considered joining his wife on the funeral pyre. Rajam's death defines Narayan's emotional profile as anything but the warmth at the core of his personality. But his baby daughter, little Hema, who was very similar to his wife, slowly restored him to life and living. This third formative period in Narayan's life following his wife's death further shaped his values, spiritual, social, and literary: 'a new kind of life and outlook and vision'.

Following his fateful meeting with the spirit medium and the séances, he starts a personal diary of his psychic experiences. Narayan did not turn away from this world following his wife's death; mental and psychic training brought him closer to the two institutions of family and society. Spirituality consists of inner happiness which gives inner peace and satisfies the soul. Spirituality is considered the inner path that enables a person to ascertain the essence of his or her being. You can feel the inner peace of spirituality in every corner of your house. People often mistakenly believe that attaining spirituality requires a specific location or a pilgrimage. Several sayings contradict this belief, asserting that our homes and hearts serve as our own temples. We don't need to visit places to experience spirituality. A quintessence of spirituality is the breakthrough of happiness

in life. (Kansal Mani and Dr. Paliwal Puja 2012). In the book, *The Vendor of Sweets*, Jagan provides his cousin with a set of keys and instructs him to open the shop at the usual hour and operate it. Eventually, Mali will address the issue. Maintain the happiness of Sivaraman and the other individuals; refrain from expelling them. If there is an emergency or you need to provide an account, you are welcome to visit the retreat. "I will instruct you on what to do." I am not flying away to another planet. The cousin was amazed at the transformation in Jagan, who kept repeating; his eyes still wet, and said a little prison life won't harm anyone. Thus, we can see and feel spirituality everywhere around us. If our mind is determined, we can find happiness, an integral part of spirituality, anywhere. Spiritually, when we begin to reduce our desires, we experience inner happiness. While spirituality aids in healing and simplifies our lives, we must comprehend that achieving inner peace automatically resolves all life's challenges. The characters in R.K. Narayan's works were somehow in disarray because of their individual differences and choices. Therefore, the study's goal is to better understand humans by applying this theory and intelligence to overcome differences and create harmony for the betterment of mankind.

Literature Review

The primary goal of the research paper was to help humanity understand certain mantras that contribute to an organized and meaningful life. Individuals may employ various stress-busting techniques to manage their tensions and conflicts. Such methods could be good or bad, but are they stimulants for the time being? Or, are there any specific ways to have a well-balanced approach to handling one's problems that lead to a healthy or well-planned life? Many researchers have come across several findings that make humanity's life meaningful and prosperous. However, the current state of humanity's lifestyle appears concerning, as the prevalence of depression and anxiety is excessively high, leading to a miserable existence. Chandran's preparations for his program and examinations reflect the anxieties and concerns that are typical of people in his age group. Psychological depth marks his initial steps into the realm of affection for Malathi. His passionate feelings for his beloved represent a common symptom observed during this life stage. The pursuit of his love leads him to vocalize opposition against his mother. However, upon learning that he cannot marry Malathi, he experiences profound disappointment, prompting him to leave his home and adopt the life of Sanyasi. Subsequently, he undergoes a sudden change of heart, deciding to return home and embark on a new chapter in his life through a business venture. Upon

his return, with the support and encouragement of his father, he initiates a new magazine business, ultimately succeeding in his endeavors. Eventually, Chandran relinquishes his aspiration to be with Malathi and acquiesces to the wishes of his parents by agreeing to marry Susila. Thus, this paper explores significant events in Chandran's journey that indicate his progression towards maturity. (Somachary Yelsoju 2016). Narayan skillfully portrays the generational divide between Mali and Jagan, highlighting the tension between tradition and modernity. In the book, *The Vendor of Sweets* (2019), R.K. Narayan mentioned that despite the differences between Jagan and Mali, Mali's youthful idealism and curiosity serve as catalysts for personal growth and transformation. Through Mali's journey, Narayan explores the universal themes of identity, autonomy, and the pursuit of happiness, reminding us that childhood is not just a time of innocence but also a period of exploration and self-discovery. Discovering the joy in life requires the essence of spirituality. When a person discovers something bigger than himself in his life, it completes its meaning.

It is an intriguing truth that American business tycoon John Rockefeller (1839–1937) was not very passionate about charitable endeavors in his early years. However, after meeting Vivekananda in 1894, he began charitable work by contributing large sums of money for public benefit. He asserted, in line with Vivekananda's views that life was about more than just accumulating wealth. In summary, money is simply a trust that you hold in your hands. It is a huge sin to use it improperly. Living for others is the best approach to getting ready for the end of life. Emily G. Liquin and Alison Gopnik (2021) stated in their article that it is also possible, of course, that children and adults differ in both their inferences and motivations. Therefore, children might have different prior biases about the world than adults and, as a result, make different inferences from the same evidence, or they might make different inferences even with similar prior beliefs. Therefore, in actual unlikely occurrences, the substantial situation of the soul and spirit is more in danger than ever. According to the World Health Organization (2021), information from international sources shows that mental illness affects 20% to 25% of people from childhood. In a family of four, one person had at least this problem, and one of the four primary reasons for that was a crisis like dejection, misuse of alcohol, schizophrenia, and bipolar depression. Many authors and research scholars showcase a positive relationship between religion and mental health. Every civilization needs a healthy, honest, compassionate, merciful, spiritual, and morally conscientious personality. Dr. Haim Ginott stated in his book, *Between Parent and Child* (2003) that when children feel understood, their loneliness and hurt diminish. Understanding chil-

dren deepens their love for their parents. A parent's sympathy serves as emotional first aid for bruised feelings. When children and parents learn better ways to express guilt and anger, and when parents learn better ways to set and enforce rules, there's less need for physical punishment. Punishment doesn't halt bad behavior; it merely enhances the individual's ability to avoid detection. Prof. Sibnath Deb wrote a book, *Childhood to Adolescence: Issues and Concerns* (2003). It is about children and adults. It states that socialization not only aids in the development of a positive outlook on life, but also fosters the development of positive qualities such as respect for others and their perspectives, acceptance, adaptability to various life situations, cooperation, tolerance, and the ability to interpret situations positively.

This, in turn, contributes to a child's psychological well-being and helps them lead a well-adjusted life. Education must start with the creation of human moral values, compassion, and tolerance of dissidence in order to maintain harmony, peace, fraternity, prosperity, and knowledge for humanity. Therefore, in addition to imparting knowledge to future educators at universities, we must also consider the spiritual and moral development of students' personalities. (Nadeghda P. Yachna and Anvar N. Khuziakhmetov 2017). Tim Kasser and Richard M. Ryan (1993) confirm that goals like prominence, wealth, and beauty often lead to more frustration than happiness. It is true that achieving spirituality requires first navigating the religious path, as it instills values, beliefs, rituals, and a rich history that help us recognize its integrity. Positive psychology is the scientific study of positive traits that help people and society thrive. Eudemonia, which is defined as "the good life" or flourishing, is a concept central to the subject since it is based on the idea that individuals want to live meaningful and full lives. (Dr. Robert Biswas Diener 2015). It is very true that a child's proper upbringing and nurturing certainly help him or her grow into a responsible person. Adolescence is a crucial age of transition from childhood to adulthood that is characterized by significant changes in social contexts, physical and mental traits, and behavior. Grown-up children who experience less well-being in psychology could experience lower levels of satisfaction, happiness, and self-esteem. This can lead to a significant increase in their levels of depression. (Carol M. Worthman and Kathy Trang 2018). The Bhagavad Gita emphasizes the importance of focusing on one's deeds or karmas, rather than on their consequences or results. (Bhagavad Gita, chapter 2, verse 47). Karmas surround and bind us when we enter this world, leaving us with no choice. Lord Krishna described another fact about life: nature, not our desires or needs, determines the results of all karmas.

Findings

R.K. Narayan stands as one of the most inspirational figures for humanity, demonstrating unwavering courage to achieve success in his life. Despite facing severe challenges, he inspired others to persevere, and his works often evoke memories of childhood. Spiritual myths have misled the world for a long time, but they haven't completely dominated ideological society. R.K. Narayan's stories feature characters from the poor class, yet they possess a remarkable trait known as humanism, a trait uncommon in the hearts of wealthy and sophisticated individuals. Spirituality does not mean running from responsibilities. A person must be spiritual, because it teaches humanity what is right and wrong. Both materiality and spirituality are required to sustain a complete life.

The work, *Between Parent and Child* has been groundbreaking, and the communication techniques Haim Ginott promoted in his book have taught adults how to become aware of and respond to feelings, as well as how to join the world of children in a sympathetic and caring way. His main concern is helping children learn how to respond appropriately, acknowledge their feelings, perceptions, and opinions, discipline them without dehumanizing them, criticize them without demeaning them, praise them without passing judgment, and express their anger without hurting them. When parents argue, children experience anxiety and guilt due to the threat to their home and their perceived or real involvement in the family conflict. Justifiably or not, children often assume that they are the cause of domestic strife. While our brains can still change as we age, Alison Gopnik claims that these changes are more likely to occur under stress and need conscious effort and attention. Adult brains tend to exploit, whereas young brains naturally explore. Therefore, as parents, our job is not to create a specific type of child. Instead, we need to provide a safe, loving, and stable environment where any kind of child can thrive. Our role is not to mould our children's minds, but to let them explore all the possibilities the world offers. Parents cannot eliminate all of their children's anxiety, but they can help them cope better when they express understanding of their concerns and prepare them for disturbing and fearful events.

The following suggestions have been made for the benefit of Adults:

1. Show empathy: Listen to your child's thoughts and agree with them, instead of ignoring or criticizing them.
2. Encourage curiosity: Create a safe space for kids that encourage

them to learn on their own, be creative, and explore.

3. Keep a balance between freedom and discipline: Set limits as needed and use positive, non-punitive ways to teach that respect the child's uniqueness.
4. Combine tradition and modernity: Help your child's personal growth and cultural standards work together in a healthy way by changing traditional family values to fit their modern needs and goals.
5. Treat others with respect: When you talk to your child, be kind and patient, and make sure that what you say helps their mental health and confidence.

The following suggestions have been made for the benefits of children:

1. Understand their feelings: Your parents have feelings, just like you do. Sometimes, they might look annoyed or strict because they are worried about your well-being or are under a lot of stress.
2. Value their intentions: Parents want to provide for you, even if it's not clear at first. Most of the time, their rules and suggestions come from sympathy and worry.
3. Look at the bigger picture: Adults sometimes think about long-term goals and tasks that you might not be able to see right now. Try to understand how they feel about things like safety and schooling.
4. Respect their traditions: Parents often follow traditions that are important to their culture or family. By learning about these, you can better understand their beliefs and accept the choices they make.
5. Keep the lines of communication open: You should tell your parents the truth about how you feel and what you think. In turn, this helps them understand you better and builds a stronger bond between you.

Conclusion

Experience or observation of human lifestyles clearly confirms that life is a journey filled with both positive and negative experiences, leading an individual to discover the true meaning of life either early or late in their lives. Despite our attempts to define our lives through factors such as success, religion, values, ego, superiority, ambitions, money, fame, revenge, attitude, and spirituality, the true meaning of life becomes evident when we recognize what is ultimately good or bad for humanity. Religion contains spirituality. The best way to understand humans' emotions, behaviors, perspectives, conflicts, stress, challenges, and differences is to read the works of R.K. Narayan, because he is the one who can better express human sentiments. One can only be spiritual when one sincerely follows religion and realizes what is sensible and logical for humanity in the end. Life becomes difficult, complex, messy, and stressful, leaving no time for appreciating its finest aspects. Then spirituality could help a person optimize the demands of the outer world, curtail his desires, and enjoy life's inherent simplicity. One must be receptive, rather than conventional or orthodox, and stick to the customary set of norms. We fully comprehend that when our habits are incorrect and unsuitable, or our views of life appear unclear, we need to reflect profoundly and scrutinize the essence of life. We must guide these misconceptions or insufficient understanding in the correct direction to foster spiritual intelligence. Being spiritual does not mean providing peace of mind for oneself alone; rather, spirituality is beyond the materialistic world and propagates humanity and prosperity for all humanity, irrespective of caste, creed, religion, and culture. Children who have a healthy relationship with their parents will grow up to have high levels of self-efficacy. Authoritarian parenting practices can deprive kids of the chance to learn and explore new options. Children with poor social relationships are vulnerable to mental health challenges like depression and anxiety. Parental education is a real, meaningful, and one-of-a-kind predictor of your child's success. The findings suggest that it is equally important to socialize so that young brains can explore things in many different ways and the more autonomy, the less enmity, the more self-reliance there is, the less parental resentment.

Futuristic Scope

The futuristic scope of this study asserts that a deeper understanding is crucial for humans to truly get to know each other. Mere dominance of being strict or commanding will not solve the purpose in the overall development of human beings. According to psychological theories, parenting

requires a deep understanding of children and social influences. We must trust children in their deeds with the utmost care and guidance, as they are the future of any society. By capturing the essence of both childhood's carefree wonder and adulthood's contemplative depth, Narayan provides a rich, multifaceted exploration of life's journey. Narayan's stories help us understand what it means to be human, making his books valuable and timeless. He shows the journey from childhood to adulthood with realness and care, making his stories meaningful with spiritual intelligence and sensibility. His characters' challenges and successes, seen through a child's innocent eyes or an adult's reflective view, encourage readers to think about their own lives and changing perspectives.

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