

# Human aspects in Indian English Writing With Reference to D. Surya Rao's Novel

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## Abstract

*The ultimate aim of D. Surya Rao is to reveal truth. Through truthful exhibition of people and places, sights and situations, he has recorded his vision of a human being and a world citizen in his work. Hence, through this paper, an effort has been made to focus on human aspects in his novels that mend the human behavior.*

**Keywords:** human aspects, traditional, materialistic, spiritual, sensibility

Although Indo-Anglian literature is rich in every branch, it is the Indo-Anglian fiction which has put India on the literary map of the world. Indo-Anglian fiction has indeed opened a vista for foreigners through which they can see India as Indians themselves would like to see her. The first Indian writer to write and publish a novel in English was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. His *Rajmohan's Wife* appeared in 1854. It was followed by the works of Romesh Chunder Dutt, another Bengali, who himself translated his own novels into English: *The Lake of Palms: A Story of Indian Domestic Life* (1902) and *The Slave Girl of Agra: An Indian Historical Romance* (1909). Rabindranath Tagore also translated some of his novels into English. The pioneering efforts of these Bengali writers paved the way for the development of the Indo-Anglian novel. And since then many Indian writers have been producing world literature of great repute for the betterment of humanity. The literature of these writers, no doubt gives pleasure to the society but most of them have immense effect on human life in enhancing human values and human aspects. The crux of writing of most of the Indian English writers has been centered to humanity and to act everyone as ideal human being. The subject and form of these writers according to geographical varieties and locale may vary from person to person, but their efforts have been always to show humanity at the apex. These Indian writers of English not only demonstrate a new consciousness of their art, but they also express Indian sensibilities. The contemporary Indian writers of English are more self-confident than ever before and they reveal an intensely felt Indian sensibility. One noteworthy literary stalwart among them is Damraju Surya Rao. He has to-date three novels to his credit: *The Two*

*Visions* (1961), *The Pilgrim* (2005) and *Raghavendra In Search of Reality* (2008) and the fourth Auto-reflection is on the verge of publication.

His first book *The Two Visions* (1962) is a novel of hopes and aspirations. The story deals with the modern middle class family where it takes more than a generation to build up the lost fortunes of a family. In spite of all frustrations, the author has clear eyes for the young mates. The youth of India still believe in the stroke of luck and the change of heart; they are not convinced that the gods are against them. The author has managed a design that takes in a considerable amount of reality and fuses it with vision; a complex design with depth as well as breadth, for it shows the past changing into the present, and something of what has to be carried into the future.

His second book *The Pilgrim* (2005) conveys message to the readers by means of informal discussions and conversations between friends who often assemble in the house of Dr. Chalam, the principal character. Discussion centers on a comparative study of urban life and rural life. The reader finds that the simple and honest lives of the villagers as depicted by William Wordsworth in his poetry are far better than the luxurious and sophisticated lives of the town-people. The characters of Annapurna and Anasuya are brought out with skill and sympathy. Although they differ in certain traits of character, they play a very noble part in the story. In fact, they dominate the male characters by their service and sacrifice in upholding the dignity of their families. Their loyalty to their husbands and affection for their children are at once admirable and pathetic. The matrimonial combinations - Somaraju- Annapurna and Gopal - Saralamma are befitting subjects for sociological study. They are studies in contrast. Incidentally, the author throws light on the superstitions and child marriages, blind belief in astrology, tradition-bound social habits, status consciousness, the pride of the landed aristocracy and extravagant weddings. Leading spend-thrift lives, men like Trimurty are reduced to pauperism and their children like Jaggu become vagabonds and criminals. Families, which are once at the zenith of wealth, power and rank in society, are reduced to penury not so much by indulgence

in bad habits as by extravagance. In a male-dominated society, women are not permitted. However, women appear to be more intelligent, worldly wise and socially adjustable than their men. Thus, the novel aims at creating an awareness of the greatness of the ancient Indian thoughts and culture among the modern youth and also awakens in them a spirit of revolt against the steep fall in moral values in all spheres of life.

Mr. Chalam, the principal character and his friends belonging to different political ideologies discuss various topics concerning the past, present and future of India. They discuss the problems facing the country, mainly corruption. They touch upon all aspects of life - educational, political, administrative, social, personal, religious, moral and spiritual. Mr. Chalam frankly says that material prosperity is not the real test of man's progress in life. It should be judged by his spiritual attainment. Love, compassion and vision of equality are the essential features of a person who seeks spiritual perfection. The Pilgrim is he who possesses the vision of equality and tries to see God in the myriads of forms constituting the world. This is the test of a true person, a true pilgrim. A detailed account of the lives of Madhav and Chitra, Srinivasan and Sushma, Annapurna and Somaraju Sr., Anasuya and Somaraju Jr. is given. Their trials and tribulations and vicissitudes present the human drama in all its colour and nobility. The Pilgrim emphasizes the importance of moral values. It tells about the greatness of ancient India and exhorts the youth to shape their lives in accordance with those values. This it does not by ethical teaching but by a lively discussion and portrayal of characters.

Raghavendra in *Search of Reality* (2008) is not a run of the mill novel dealing with a stereotyped story with the ingredients of sex and romance. It is an experimental novel with a mission namely reforming the contemporary youth and weaning them away from the deleterious effects of watching television and cinema which have become a menace to society and a source of mind pollution particularly to the youth who are in the impressionable age. It has also the positive purpose of directing their thinking towards spiritual values without which integrated personality development cannot take place. Unfortunately the existing curriculum of education has neglected this aspect. True religion is not performance of rituals and external ceremonies. Religiosity is not spirituality. It should lead to service and help the needy with compassion, love and humanity. In this novel an attempt has been made through the character of Raghava to see whether the reader is provoked to believe in God in such a way that a pure and pious life can be led.

His novels are an effective aid to an imaginative understanding of India's recent past. The novels are valuable documents in as much as they faithfully present the particular phases of our national life. Action-packed stories, breath-taking climaxes, readability, raciness of language, swift movement of story, suspense are some of the characteristic features of his novels. All these go a long way to impart his fiction a kind of attraction. If the success or failure of a novelist is to be judged on the basis of the number of readers, D. Surya Rao is perhaps one of the most successful novelists. His novels certainly contain all the elements which make a novel popular. The formulae which he has worked out for himself are quite simple: illicit-relations, violence, love-making, politics and spirituality. He seldom repeats situations and rarely becomes uninteresting. The atmosphere in his novels is always throbbing with activities and it is always fresh.

Though D. Surya Rao has not found solutions to all these problems, he has attained a measure of success and recognition which gives his work significance. It is the awareness of the problems that enables him to hold a brief for all the Indo-Anglian writers in English. In the foreword of *The Two Visions*, A.G. Stock remarks: "..... In spite of all frustrations and the author has clear eyes for them the youth of India still believe in the stroke of luck and the change of heart; they are not convinced that the gods are against them."

The novels of D. Surya Rao are mainly the novels of character and action. His themes are rich and varied. Whether it is a life in the modern age or superstitions and child-marriages; blind belief in astrology, tradition-bound social habits, status consciousness, the pride of landed aristocracy and extravagant weddings or the days the immediate past of the partition, the smugglers, the fast set of cities D. Surya Rao seems equally at home and always tries to write as an insider. The story of modern India seen through the eyes of a village youth who jumps from the security of his home into the bewildering unreason of college life, and from that into the still more unintelligible struggle for existence in cities, the story that shows the path of liberation and the story which presents the eventful and chequered life of Sri Badrinarayana Sai Prasad and his opinions in all kinds of things in discussions in friend's circle

What we observe is that D.Surya Rao's characters are seldom in conflict with themselves. They are never frustrated by their own passions and impulses. They, after having missed their purpose of life, hardly become introverts. Despite their personal and circumstantial limitations, they obey their instincts more than their

reason. They seldom shed tears on their failure. When they act, their actions reveal their manly traits. They face their problems squarely and with equanimity of their mind. Very often Rao forces his characters into the most dramatic situations. These situations sound unreal, artificial, devised deliberately for the interest of the readers. Majority of his women characters are fully credible. They serve the decorative purpose in his novels almost all time. They are all young, energetic, and beautiful and not only the living dolls but are beautiful in outward appearance, too. They touch the depth of our minds. They love deeply from the core of their heart. Most of his women characters serve as a role model giving inspiration to others. They are not just a puppet and decorative dolls in the show-cases in fashionable drawing-halls.

The touch to the inner self is very important. It brings about a miraculous transformation of the whole situation. This is a kind of divine touch with which everything is turned into gold. This is something that happens in case of D. Surya Rao's characters; especially in case of his women characters. Vidya is deeply involved in Raghava. Humour or irony without a bitter sting in it is indicative of the healthy attitude of the writer towards life. It may be said that a writer who has experienced the ups and downs in the real life or who is acquainted with the real misery in life can create humour or irony in his literature. Rao has received his experience from quite a different stratum of life. He has created a kind of dream-world in which people are required to go through the hurdles of life. Pathos and smile go hand in hand in his novels. He has taken his experience from different fields relating to our real life. His experience is representative of the life or society in general. He has observed and concentrated not only on the light, happy, romantic moments of life but serious and complex situations as well. And he wants to exploit those moments in his fiction through thrill, excitement, romance, illicit-relations and drama to serve his purpose of entertainment.

His novels not only present the sophisticated world where dancing, drinking, toasting, money-making, career-keeping and swearing for nothing or for trifle things all-important but at the same time the author has depicted the spiritual world and it seems to be the whole meaning of life. Most of his characters have an idea of the spiritual world, of spiritual agonies and delights. His novels are eventful and all the events are full of thrill, the life of his characters is full of thrilling events and dramatic adventures. They give some turn not only to their material life but bring some changes in their inner selves and their outer lives, too. D. Surya Rao didn't catch only the dancing,

curly, attractive ripples on the surface but he seems to be aware of the hidden and heavy storms in the deep, deep water. That is why his novels retain universal values. The basic human values are the same everywhere in the world. In his novels, *The Pilgrim*, when Durgaiyah, Venkatrao's friend brings proposal of marriage from Somaraju Senior for Annapurna, this is an important moment of taking decision in life. But the novelist uses it to depict the inner struggle that is going on in the mind of Somaraju.

Social commitment is a kind of virtue in any kind of art. A man cannot work in a vacuum or in isolation from what is going on but exists in the society, in social environment that is constantly modifying the events. Real task of the novelist lies in studying the interaction between the society and an individual but a fictional world of the author is strangely illusionary. It is attractive only if we are able to forget the reality. The world of the zamindars is real and the author has presented it with complete reality, and full authenticity.

His sensibilities are tradition-oriented. It seems that he has respect for the traditions of our country. And he always takes precautions not to defy those traditions. His fictional world is quite the same as that of common Indian readers. The common reader feels that this is the life we live and understand. This is the world where the common reader gets entry. While depicting something Indian he depicts it is an insider. The fact is that he has his own world around him that decides totally Indian. The atmosphere in which he is born and brought up allows him to acquaint with real Indian. In his novels Indian culture pervades throughout. It is well-known that the author was engaged in teaching, research and administrative fields. He served in four states of India and retired as a lecturer bagging a vast experience. The code of conduct and the conservative manner of behavior of his teaching profession before and after the British in India always reminds him to remain honest to himself and his profession. He never diverts his attention on this path for just paltry things or for any monetary gain. His profession is such that it keeps him always in touch with the society through service or by profession. Hence, he is quite aware of the ground realities of Indian soil and of the human-being. As a novelist D. Surya Rao has given justice and always remained thoroughly Indian. Dr. Prema Nanda Kumar in her letter to the author writes, "D. Surya Rao has made a niche for himself among the Indian writers of English. He deserves all commendation."

Renunciation, sacrifice are the ideals of Indian culture. D. Surya Rao's novels are not devoid of man and woman

relations outside the marriage. The illicit relations also spring from pure imagination in the sense that they are neither indispensable nor genuine. They are perhaps only for heightening the effect and creating suspense. In his novels almost all marriages break due to intervention of fate and not because of sexual relations between husband and wife outside their marriage. In *The Two Visions*, fate intervenes and Ramu's wish to marry Vimala remains unfulfilled. In *The Pilgrim*, though Sushma is married with Sridhar, but the intimacy that develops between Srinivasan and Sushma after Sridhar's sudden departure gives the chance to germinate the love between Srinivasan and Sushma. They plan to marry but again it is not their fate. Indian life in general is still modest. Self-control, self-restraint are the ideals still cherished in Indian life. Thus, D. Surya Rao, through his novels, proves to be a true son of India. His novels are appropriate to all times and places for their global, social and spiritual views focusing on human aspects to correct living of human being. At the same time his novels find a solution to correct existence as preached in the Bhagavad-Gita: To serve mankind without desire for reward, that is, Nishkama Karma.

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