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THE POLITICAL NOVELS OF R. K. NARAYANA: REFLECTIONS ON POSTCOLONIAL CONTEXTS

Dr. Binay Shanker Roy
Professor and Head, Department of English, BRA Bihar University, Muzaffarpur
binaysroy@gmail.com

Abstract

R.K. Narayan stands out as one of the prominent authors in Indian English literature. His themes and style set him apart from his contemporaries, such as Raja Rao and Mulkraj Anand. Unlike Raja Rao, who engages deeply in philosophical inquiries, and Mulkraj Anand, who is rooted in Marxist ideology, Narayan is more of an artist focused on the experiences of everyday life and family dynamics. In his novels, he adeptly weaves together contrasting elements, blending romance with realism, materialism with spirituality, avarice with detachment, mischief with virtue, and the rural with the urban. This mixture illustrates a balance between instructive and aesthetic values, aiming to both educate and entertain. His connection to Indian cultural essence, paired with his engagement with Western language and civilization, enables him to express the interplay between Eastern and Western experiences skilfully. Narayan's approach to English and its literature reflects his attempt to merge Indian sensibilities with colonial perspectives. However, like many colonial and post-colonial authors, he does not overtly critique the colonial system; instead, subtle critiques and irony can be found scattered through his works. The effects of colonialism emerge in his characters, who sometimes confront it or adapt to it, occasionally employing English customs that serve their needs. In his narratives, both colonizers and the colonized coexist, often finding mutual benefits.

It is quite remarkable that such a significant topic has not garnered the in-depth critical analysis it warrants. No comprehensive study exists examining Narayan's novels through a post-colonial lens. Some critics have attempted to explore his work from this perspective, but their analyses lack the depth required for thorough research. It appears that modern critics have become so engrossed in the works of post-colonial authors that they overlook the necessity of addressing R.K. Narayan's novels within a post-colonial theoretical context.

R.K. Narayan, celebrated as a master of humour in Indo-Anglican literature, shows little interest in political matters. Similar to Jane Austen, his strength lies in highlighting the peculiar behaviours and attitudes of ordinary people. Nevertheless, he has produced a novel that examines the political landscape of India's struggle for independence through a humorous lens.

Keywords: Indo-Anglican, Marxist ideology, post-colonial, realism, materialism with spirituality, critiques

The discourses of colonialism present the notion that the race, culture, and civilization in India during that era were superior. This belief serves to uphold and reinforce a superiority complex. In contrast, post-colonial literature challenges these assertions and claims. Such works celebrate and highlight indigenous identity and culture. R. K. Narayan, a post-colonial author, examines the various facets of Indian identity and culture in his novel Waiting for the Mahatma.

The primary aim of the book is to showcase the multifaceted personality of Gandhi. His stories unfold in the fictional town of Malgudi, a place rich in ancient myths and history, which V.S. Naipaul connects with these themes in his writing. However, R. J. Crane aptly observes that Narayan's portrayal of Malgudi is more impressive than that of other Indian authors. He argues that Malgudi is a fictional setting where Narayan can depict political events occurring on the continent.

Waiting for the Mahatma by R.K. Narayan is a significant postcolonial novel that delves into themes of love, politics, and the struggle for independence in colonial India. The narrative captures the complexities of a society weighing Mahatma Gandhi's legacies against the backdrop of colonial oppression during the Indian independence movement. It also examines the intricacies of love within a turbulent political environment. Bharati, a devoted follower of Gandhi and an active participant in the independence movement, captures Sriram's heart. Their relationship undergoes trials due to conflicting political beliefs, personal sacrifices, and the demands of the national movement, reflecting the larger battle for freedom. Narayan explores the tensions that arise when love intertwines with a broader political context, investigating how individual desires align with political duty. Sriram finds himself torn between his affection for Bharati and his hesitance to engage in politics, seeking to navigate his aspirations alongside the collective quest for independence. The novel raises complex questions about moral dilemmas, personal responsibility, and the sacrifices necessary in the pursuit of a greater cause.

In this analysis, a thorough examination of the entire text of the selected novel is conducted using post-colonial critical theories as a framework. The focus of the study is centered on these research questions, which were formulated in response to Tyson's guidance: i) How does the author depict the culture, beliefs, and lifestyle of the colonizers? ii) What approach does the author take to present and discuss indigenous identity and culture? iii) How are the indigenous heroes characterized? iv) How is the exploitation and oppression by colonizers portrayed? v) What is the author’s perspective on hybridity and mimicry? Waiting for the Mahatma vividly illustrates the political atmosphere of its time, set against the Indian liberation struggle. The novel offers a glimpse into a pivotal period in Indian history when the nation was fervently striving to liberate itself from British colonial rule. The opening scene depicts the British holding complete cultural dominance. The impact of Sriram’s father's death while serving the British in Mesopotamia is significant, as he was an Indian soldier in the empire.

It is evident that British ideology and culture exert a profound influence over Sriram. He perceives British culture, ethnicity, and civilization as unparalleled. The image of the British queen at Kanni's shop captivates him. "She has curly hair, apple-shaped cheeks, and beautiful, large, dark eyes" (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 6). As an eager mimic, Sriram longs to possess a photograph of the British queen, a symbol of the dominance of British racial and cultural standards. This illustrates the cultural marginalization experienced by the colonized, a consequence of the colonial system. Much like the residents of Fanon, Sriram yearns to assimilate into English culture. Ultimately, he wishes to marry someone who embodies white culture, beauty, and whiteness. He even offers any sum to obtain Banya's photo, which he sees as a charm. However, Banya refuses to part with it. This paints Sriram as an individual unsure of

his identity or the uniqueness of Indian culture and traditions. He desires "the British queen's rosy cheeks and curly hair for his dearly departed mother" (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 1). Fanon refers to this as the phase of assimilation.

Narayan, while showcasing the strength of English culture, also illustrates and celebrates Indian identity and ancient practices through Sriram's grandmother. "She is ancient, much like India, but no one knows her true age. She represents devotion, sacrifice, and love; every penny of her deceased son's pension has been saved for her grandson" (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 5). Narayan reveals the character and identity of Sriram's grandmother, who champions the traditions of Indian culture. She symbolizes the Great Mother of India, ready to make any sacrifice for her children's welfare. In this portrayal, the grandmother's life story and its realities coalesce.

In contrast to Naipaul, who argues that the mythic elements of Indian culture and identity face “petrification" and "restricted lives" (Quoted in Rabby Imam, p. 21), Narayan emphasizes the positive aspects of India's ancient traditions and culture. By referencing the locale where Sriram and his grandmother reside, which has historical roots, he honors the enduring essence of Indian identity and culture. The celebration of native festivities should resonate throughout the entire narrative. In a true Indian manner, Grandmother serves Sriram meals on a leaf and rice from a bronze pot while he sits on the floor.

He drinks water from a brass tumbler, and Narayan pays tribute to Indian dishes such as "badam halwa, idlies, vadai, chicken pulao, and chappatis" (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 195). Sriram's grandmother is celebrating her grandson's twentieth birthday, marking an important day for both of them and for India as well. It symbolizes a crucial phase of integration for Sriram and the nation, both expected to mature. The grandmother, deeply rooted in Indian traditions, epitomizes the figure of a typical Indian grandmother. On her birthday, she receives sugarcane, which, according to Indian customs, is believed to bring good luck. She adorns the entrance with a string of mango leaves and sprinkles colored rice powder on the doorstep to honor her grandson's special day.

During the puja, the grandmother welcomes the new year with jaggery and jasmine, reflecting the respect for native Indian and Hindu traditions. Sriram is still naive and detached from societal norms and obligations, as he has yet to absorb India’s customs. When his grandmother asks him to invite his friends to the birthday celebration, he declines. This is akin to Gandhi’s call for everyone to "spin, read the Bhagavad Gita, recite Ram Nam, and wear khadi" (Waiting for the

Mahatma, p. 96). The celebration of Indian identity comes full circle. Narayan emphasizes Gandhi's wish for his followers to learn Indian languages, showcasing the celebration of indigenous culture and identity. While imprisoned, Gandhi encouraged his volunteers to read Tulsi Das’s Ramayana and stay active by spinning the charkha, illustrating his deep connection to Hindu culture and identity. This reflects a celebration of Indianness and a rejection of Western influence. Interestingly, Jaswant Singh later described Gandhi's "religiously provincial character" (Quoted Rabby Imam, p. 21), attributing it to the Partition of India, which contrasts with Narayan's favorable depiction of Gandhi's spiritual side.

In Narayan’s work, the love, devotion, sacrifice, and fidelity of an Indian Hindu girl are highlighted. After a long train journey, Sriram feels anxious and unsettled about his disheveled appearance. His hair is tousled, and he feels unattractive and awkward. He wishes to blend into

the crowd before he meets Bharati. Upon seeing Sriram, Bharati appears relieved from his nervousness. Spotting him, she rushes over, waving her arms, exclaiming, "Oh, how good to see you again!" (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 236), as she takes his hands. Sriram forgets his worries and becomes absorbed in her presence, admiring her beauty. Narayan illustrates how she brings him joy and vitality. Over the years, Bharati's kindness, affection, and unwavering loyalty have lifted him to another realm. She embodies selflessness as an Indian Hindu girl, who, instead of accompanying her lover, chooses to fast. Her character is fully representative of Indian culture. Similar to Sidhwa's tribute to a brown Hindu girl, Narayan does the same for Bharati. He demonstrates how Sri Lanka and India begin to move away from colonial British ideals of cultural domination.

As Sriram matured, he encountered imperial influences. His first glimpse of Indian identity and its beauty came from Bharati, the daughter of Bharat. She advocates for donations in support of the Congress, representing the essence of Indian identity, traditions, and culture. Bharati is a vital element of Indian customs and heritage, while the grandmother symbolizes India's past, and

Bharati reflects its present. Narayan praises Bharati's beauty, which Naipaul would have reduced to merely another girl dressed in khadi. Sriram is mesmerized by her stunning appearance; she is youthful and vibrant, with eyes that shine with joy. In his eyes, she is far more captivating than the British king.

This sentiment rejects notions of superiority and the confines of imperial culture. It illustrates the reception of public culture on both personal and collective levels. Sriram, while wearing his dhoti and jibba, burns his mill-made clothes in kerosene (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 99). Through Sriram's romantic connection with Bharati, Narayan emphasizes India's charm and the beauty of its people. Bharati moves with the grace of a dancer, inspiring Sriram to yearn for her. To him, she resembles a bird soaring through the sky.

He longs to serenade her but feels guilty for not filling her money box. Compared to the "otherworldly creature" (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 24) that she is, Sriram feels inadequate. He wishes he had completed his B.A. and learned the manners necessary to be worthy of Bharati. To Sriram, Bharati seems angelic or like a goddess (Deveta). She embodies his eternal affection, radiant even in khadi. Narayan's narrative flows like a romantic poem exalting the beauty of an Indian girl adorned in homespun clothing rather than Western attire. Arriving at Gandhi's camp in the early morning, just as his beloved Bharati feels drawn by desire, Sriram feels compelled to marry her. However, being a girl rooted in tradition, Bharati cannot make such a choice in separation from societal norms. This aspect highlights her completeness. She cannot marry without the blessing of Bapu (Gandhi). The importance of this situation cannot be overstated, implying that Sriram must let go of aspirations for a Western partner and commit himself to Bharati. Discovering her involvement in Gandhi's movement, Sriram decides to align himself with Gandhi and the ideals of Indian identity and culture. Through Sriram's character, R.K. Narayan powerfully conveys the spirit of the ordinary Indian citizen's political awakening in postcolonial India. Sriram's journey symbolizes a collective vision of a brighter, independent future, representing the diverse aspirations of a populace united in their pursuit of sovereignty.

Malgudi is getting ready for Gandhi's arrival. Narayan shows how many people truly oppose Gandhi's struggle against the empire. The leader of the municipal committee, Mr. Natesh,

shows no interest in Gandhi or his political beliefs. Instead, his arrogance compels him to flaunt his wealth and mansion while relishing the idea of having hosted Gandhi. He makes all the necessary adjustments to his home's décor to suitably welcome Gandhi.

In contrast, Gandhi decides to stay in the sweeper's colony, depicted as someone who finds it hard to distance himself from his people. Rather than maintaining separation, he integrates and connects with them. Once referred to as the "half-naked fakir of India" by the British Prime Minister and as a "little bastard" by John Masters, Gandhi is celebrated as the Mahatma. The book's title honors Gandhi's role as Mahatma, alongside the native Indian Hindu identity and customs. Sriram and Bharati must wait for Gandhi's blessing before they can marry, illustrating how the characters in the story are compelled to await this eminent figure, highlighting the importance of customs and social norms in Indian culture. Mahatma is deeply intertwined with Hinduism, as well as Indian history and mythology. Narayan portrays Gandhi's efforts to awaken the Indian populace and prepare them for the struggle for freedom. He forsakes "the masters' language" and communicates in Hindi to them. Fanon eloquently captures the plight of figures like Gandhi, stating, "Suddenly, the language of the ruling power is felt to burn your lips." Gandhi was aware of the colonizers' strategies of containment, their superiority complex, and the connection between the English language and power.

Moreover, he recognizes the strong bond between language and culture, highlighted by Macaulay's arguments. Fanon views Gandhi's actions as part of a nationalist phase, often referred to as the combat stage, as well as a form of cultural nationalism. He acts as both a wakeup call and an avatar of genuine truth. Gandhi organizes his movement with the help and backing of the people. "Ram Dhun, spinning of the charkha, and the practice of absolute truth and nonviolence," are central to his teachings. Narayan depicts Indian tradition and identity while urging his compatriots to embrace Gandhi's rejection of the labels and prejudices imposed by the

empire. His focus is on fostering national consciousness through these efforts. Gandhi literally sheds garments to explore the history of his own body. Narayan demonstrates Gandhi's aim to craft a new national identity from its ancient culture. Martin Green's views align with Narayan's portrayal of Gandhi as an anti-imperialist, striving to instill pride in Indians regarding their heritage. Narayan sees Gandhi's commitment to nonviolence as a response to colonial portrayals of the colonized as primitive beings, who supposedly only understand death or punishment. Gandhi seeks to convince the British Empire that Indians epitomize civilization, surpassing all myths of inferiority, and that they alone embody the principles of nonviolence and truth as the most refined nation.

Crane challenges Narayan's depiction of reality in the novel, arguing that it lacks a complete perspective because it omits the British. Unlike other British narratives about India, this one does include them; however, they do not take center stage in the story. It is complex to agree that Gandhi is merely a peripheral character. Nevertheless, Crane accurately states that Sriram is the story's primary focus, with "the historical elements of the novel revolving around Gandhi's role in the National Movement." According to Crane, Gandhi's significant historical presence marks a notable departure from the traditional model of the historical novel. He is shown multitasking: "He spoke while his hands were busy turning the spinning wheel, drawing out a fine thread." He reads a letter to a man sitting nearby with a pad on his knee and dictating his response. Interestingly, Cronin misinterprets Gandhi's charkha as a sort of religious item,

akin to a rosary; in fact, Cronin is quite harsh when he calls the charkha a "wickedly frustrating little machine." This is an unfair judgment. As he is not Indian, he may lack insight into the nation's true history and culture. Crane describes charkha spinning and the practice of absolute truth as tactics for defeating the British. Intriguingly, one character in *Waiting for the Mahatma* inaccurately portrays Gandhi as divisive. Despite other colonial writers like E.M. Forster painting a negative picture, Narayan celebrates Gandhi's admiration for the beauty of Indian rivers, landscapes, sunlight, and air. Lenny's account of meeting Gandhi also supports Narayan's portrayal. Narayan illustrates Gandhi's emphasis on the wisdom of elders and the importance of maintaining traditions. He highlights Gandhi's focus on social peculiarities as opposed to the Western fixation on individuality and uniqueness. Although Sriram gains his grandmother's approval, he is still barred from joining Gandhi's circle. In contrast, Gandhi appoints Bharati as Sriram's Guru, instructing him to treat her "with respect and reverence." Bharati's social significance elevates Gandhi's standing. She feels a strong need to communicate with him regularly, responding as if she embodies Bharat's essence.

In Narayan's view, Indians realized "the light of civilization" and could see the "real benefits" of the British Raj. He emphasizes the devastating famine affecting seven hundred thousand villages under British rule, highlighting India's indigenous identity, mythology, and history. Rao states in the foreword of *Kanchipuram*, "There is no village in India—no matter how humble—that lacks a rich sthalapurana, or legendary history." Through Narayan's lens, Gandhi's persistent efforts to empower those suffering shine brightly. He points out that all of India's surplus men, grain, and timber are stockpiled in a massive war reserve in Western Europe, capturing the plight of the nation. "See what the British have done to our country," exclaims Gorpad, a character in the book. The famine's toll is evident in the sight of the starving, rib-showing children. "There is no one to look after them; everyone is busy with this war," Gorpad concludes. The war machine purchases grain at any cost, stating, "It's too large of a competitor for these poor people." Unlike Sidhwa, Narayan portrays the Second World War not as a mere backdrop but reveals another side of India during the Raj—exposing the deprivation, hunger, and suffering of the Indian populace. Narayan affirms Fanon's observations on the horrific realities of colonialism. He sheds light on the conditions of Indians under the Raj. India resembles a prison; its people lack human rights and dignity. He echoes Kent's sentiment from Shakespeare's *King Lear*, suggesting that freedom lies elsewhere while Indians languish in exile. They experience treatment akin to that of slaves and prisoners.

Furthermore, Zobra, a Muslim member of the Congress party, is being detained without charges or a trial as stated by Shah Nawaz, in accordance with the "Defence of India Rules." The police under colonial rule show little regard for legal protocols. As noted by the remnants of the Raj, Sriram can be held "without a trial or the framing of any charges" (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 191). V.S. Naipaul expresses a comparative detachment towards the Orientals, observing that the inhabitants of the Ivory Coast live in a state of fear and lead "constricted lives" (Quoted RabbyImam, p. 24). During the Raj, Indians feared the collector because the "Defence of India Act" permitted him to detain any Indian. Myths regain their influence in pivotal moments of political and social life, particularly when other communal threads lose their significance. A fellow inmate of Sriram retreats into a realm of myth and fantasy as a response to the harsh reality of human degradation and oppression (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 195). The so-called "benefits" of the Raj are depicted as silence, intimidation, isolation, and alienation. "He was

struck by the isolation crafted amid people who lived on the same planet, yet were utterly cut off from one another" (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 199). Over time, convicts are returned to their routine work in quarries. Cronin's (1989) assertion that Waiting for the Mahatma shuns politics is hard to accept, as politics is fundamental to the novel. Narayan has adeptly woven a political narrative through the characters' passionate quests for independence and activism. The protagonists' lives exemplify how political and personal changes are intertwined. Their individual tales resonate with a larger political narrative that highlights the strength of faith and the resolute spirit of a populace eager to carve out its own destiny amid vast transformation.

Regarding political progress and change, S. M. Hasan notes: "The novel clearly illustrates the characteristics of Gandhian mobilization, the Quit India Campaign, Non-Cooperation movement, the formation of Indian bureaucracy, and the rise of neocolonial politicians shortly after the British departed" (Hasan, p. 110). Hasan's observations underscore how Waiting for the Mahatma realistically depicts historical events and transitions in post-colonial India, including the establishment of the Indian administration under British rule and Gandhi's tactics of mobilization, such as the Quit India Campaign and the Non-Cooperation movement. It also suggests that the narrative portrays the emergence of post-independence leaders who may have retained certain colonial practices, hinting at an ongoing relation to governance and leadership. The novel offers insights into these critical historical and political facets of India's journey toward independence, especially as Narayan articulates his personal views on Gandhi's political approach.

Gandhi's famous statement on August 1942, asserting "Britain must quit India," sparked a nationwide response akin to a mantra. People across the land echoed "Quit India," creating unrest among the authorities. The Home Secretary grew anxious at its echo, leading to its prohibition in polite society. Despite Gandhi's imprisonment following this declaration, the phrase garnered momentum and ultimately manifested enough power to drive the British away. Not a single blank wall remained in the country that did not display that message. Everywhere one turned, "Quit India" was visible (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 102).

This reflects Gandhi's political approach. It is similarly challenging to concur with the view that the novel is primarily a humorous bildungsroman. He is correct, however, in asserting that it is partly a religious myth fueled by nationalism. Through Sriram, we catch glimpses of Gandhi's Salt March to Dandi in 1930 (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 120). In addition to resisting the empire's authority and violating English salt regulations, Narayan illustrates how India is depleting its forests and timber to support the empire's military endeavors. Although Sriram is driven by personal aspirations, he gradually shifts from idolizing his own desires to embracing a societal tradition embodied in Gandhi. His initial yearning for Bharati, who at that time is not fully integrated into society, evolves slowly yet purposefully. He is progressing toward completion and unity, conveying to Indians a message against the Raj's exploitation of their resources (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 107).

In the narrative, Narayan depicts the British's cultivated lifestyle amidst the suffering, deprivation, and hunger of the Indians. Sriram arrives at a plantation perched 4,000 feet above sea level, having left the Mathieson Estate, which belongs to an English gentleman. He encounters the Englishman while he smokes his pipe. The Indian staff wear their white uniforms adorned with buttons to emphasize their master's imperial authority. Sriram admires the beautifully designed wicker seats draped in chintz, surrounded by plants. He compares it

with his own rundown temple built long ago, which houses numerous snakes and scorpions, alongside his sleeping mat. "All this while millions of people in this country are starving and homeless!" (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 107). This showcases British India, where the estate's British owner supervises 5,000 field laborers and 200 factory and office workers (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 114). This serves as a response to Cronin's argument; Conrad similarly portrays the colonialists' affluent lifestyle in contrast to the suffering and poverty.

When Bharati is imprisoned, she fully adheres to Gandhi's guidance, yielding to the country's social and cultural expectations. In contrast, Sriram remains preoccupied with personal and private matters, prioritizing his own well-being over national concerns, and attempts to evade arrest. Narayan demonstrates how Sriram gradually becomes more open to Indian traditions. He adjusts his attitude, resigns himself to his role, and acknowledges the significance of custom. "Will you marry me when we are free from this? Will you promise, if Bapu allows it?" (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 141). He is progressing toward a holistic understanding and realization that ultimately, no one will care (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 219). Sriram, relieved to be on his own after years of pursuit by his captors, reflects on the British prime minister's wartime sentiments regarding Gandhi. This hints at the well-known scenario in which the empire's rulers depicted Eastern leaders as the lowest of "Others." Said (2001) refers to the colonialist techniques of defining, forming opinions about, teaching, legitimizing remarks on, and exercising control over the Orient: to summarize, orientalism stands as a Western strategy for managing, categorizing, and regulating the orient.

Like other writers addressing independence and Partition, Narayan focuses on the resultant riots and violence. He illustrates the brutal attacks on Muslims and Hindus, showcasing how these gangs ruthlessly pursue individuals of different faiths. Even Sriram can "miraculously save his life" (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 234) after gang members confirm his Hindu identity. Sidhwa illustrates similar scenarios. Narayan highlights Gandhi's "mission for harmony during the violence of Partition" (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 231), featuring Gandhi's visits to Noakhali, Kolkata, and Bengal. He depicts the tragic scenes of men being killed, women taken away, homes set ablaze, and children abandoned. Narayan conveys Gandhi's anguish over women's suffering—losing homes, children, and honor. He illustrates Gandhi's absence from the festivities marking India's Independence Day on August 15, 1947, indicating his choice to be in Calcutta. "His place was where people were suffering, not where people were celebrating" (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 243). Gandhi traversed Bengal's marshlands barefoot during a peace mission, passing through villages, condemning the aggressors while aiding the victims. He lingered longer and risked his life in the regions most afflicted by violence. Narayan had every reason not to "glorify" the freshly formed nation amidst the turmoil and suffering that followed Partition and independence.

Furthermore, Sidh does not emphasize the celebration of independence. In Narayan's work, Gandhi's intense fascination with mythology and spirituality is evident, as is his desire to minimize religious fervor to avoid potential violence. The campers are all given flower names, reflecting a lack of discrimination based on religion. Bharati had thirty children prior to her marriage (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 250). Before his death, we catch a glimpse of Gandhi, portrayed as more than just an individual, embodying a blend of change and tradition. Rather than focusing solely on Gandhi, Narayan highlights the universal, human aspect of his character. He shows the interplay between politics and personal connections in Gandhi's life.

Gandhi inquires about the well-being of the orphans, noting that a little girl named Anar is suffering from a cold. He generously distributes oranges, apples, and flowers among the children (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 250). Like any young Indian woman, Bharati bows her head and remains silent as Gandhi gives his final approval for her marriage. "We are waiting for your blessed permission to marry" (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 252). According to an unusual fact in the book, Bharati, as a conventional Indian bride, undergoes a surprising transformation. Cronin has fundamentally misunderstood Bharati's character. Narayan depicts her as deeply entrenched in Indian traditions while being thoroughly modern. She embodies what Khan aptly describes as "a harmonious coexistence symbolizing unity, a wholeness" toward Cronin's perspective. Incorrectly, Cronin asserts that Narayan's protagonists are continuously evolving (Khan, pp. 2728). Bharati also represents the hybrid phenomenon of post-colonial culture, born from the interaction of European cultural systems and local realities, aimed at establishing or reestablishing a unique identity. To a lesser extent, Sriram exemplifies this as well. He starts with an independent mindset and gradually recognizes the importance of social ties and tradition. When Gandhi states, "She would be a very unbecoming bride, who spoke her mind aloud!" (Waiting for the Mahatma, "a symbol of non-violence and love" p. 252), Hindu extremists assassinate Gandhi. For millions, the violence is extreme (Waiting for the Mahatma, p. 254).

The analysis asserts that R.K. Narayan embraced indigenous Indian culture, traditions, rituals, and beliefs in Waiting for the Mahatma. He regards Gandhi as a national hero who advocated for his country’s liberation, embodying both a man and something greater. Gandhi represents a catalyst for social and political change, as well as a revitalizer of ancient Hindu identity and culture. He is shown as dismantling social prejudices, including untouchability, and as a proponent of women's equality. The book’s title pays tribute to Gandhi’s esteemed title, the Mahatma. The narrative highlights the individual’s connection to Indian culture, underlining Gandhi’s understanding of its societal significance. Narayan emphasizes Gandhi's efforts to bring comfort and peace to those in mourning. He challenges colonial assumptions of superiority while praising the pride Indians have in their identity, culture, and history. Narayan also depicts the empire's exploitation of native resources. The study illustrates how Narayan symbolizes the wounds inflicted upon Indians by the British Raj, shedding light on the suffering, hunger, and hardships faced by those under colonial rule. Through the fictional characters Sriram and Bharati, Narayan portrays the progression of Indian culture from imitation to a celebration of identity. Additionally, he explores the relationship between imperialism and culture and demonstrates how Indians reject colonial ideologies. He utilizes numerous Indian terms, phrases, and idioms to emphasize corporate identity, culture, and a distinct Indian English. Narayan honors Indian beauty through love and Bharati. The love of an Indian girl for her partner challenges Western stereotypes about India and its people in Waiting for the Mahatma.

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