

Course - XIV INDIAN LITERATURE IN English (Fiction & Prose)
M.A. IVth Sem (English)

Topic - Characterization of Women in R.K. Narayan's
'The Dark Room'

- ⇒ The Dark Room (1938) is Narayan's third novel, in which women is presented as a victim and Man her constant and relentless oppressor.
- ⇒ In The Dark Room, Narayan presents two major female characters Savitri and Shanta Bai. Savitri is legally married to the protagonist of the novel while, Shanta Bai is the other woman in his life.
- ⇒ But neither of them is allowed to venture out independently in the society, without a male identity tag in front of their names.
- ⇒ From a nationalistic point of view, Savitri is the traditional housewife, while Shanta Bai is the modern woman in search of emancipation. But both are equally vulnerable when it concerns their positions in the patriarchy.
- ⇒ Savitri plays different roles simultaneously. She is the kind and obliging mother. But her role as a wife is nerve-racking and precarious though she is quite obedient, dutiful, and submissive.
- ⇒ Savitri is representative of all women in a traditional family in the Indian context. In Indian society, it is an established rule and practice, sanctified for ages, that a woman in a conservative family is born only to stand and serve the man, bear, beget and bring up his children.

⇒ R.K. Narayan presents the two contrasting women Savitri and Shanta Bai react in different ways to the same situation.

⇒ Savitri is simple, modest, gentle, loving and obedient. She is traditional and simple in her own way whereas Shantabai is flirting, more modern and unconventional in her ideas and behaviour. She doesn't care for traditional norms.

⇒ The role of individuality in women is seen in both Savitri and Shantabai, but Savitri is unable to live in isolation whereas Shantabai is capable of living without anybody's support.

⇒ Savitri represents a modest woman who does not complain and keep under the chain of restrictions that have destroyed her freedom. The novel also dealt with how a dutiful wife suffers silently in the orthodox Hindu culture and patriarchal norms of the Indian society.

⇒ Savitri belongs to the group of oppressive women who do not have the slightest power to do anything of their own. She loses all notions of her independence, her individuality, stature and strength.

⇒ Thus, Savitri of The Dark Room is a classic exposition of the Indian woman, struggling to maintain equilibrium in the face of grave situations, trying to look upon everything as an aspect of fate and seeking inner contentment and peace in the world of illusion.