

**Return of the Protagonist Savitri to the Dark Room
In “*The Dark Room*” written by R K Narayan**

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Description of the Author: Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami was an Indian writer known for his set in the fictional South Indian town of Malgudi. He was a leading author of early Indian literature in English. In his long career he published fourteen novels, over two hundred short stories, a memoir, two travel books, innumerable essays and two plays. His first novel was *Swami and Friends*. In his writing in his long career – themes like exile and return, woman and her status in the society, myths and the ancient Indian past, tradition and modernity, Malgudi and its culture, appearance and reality, the family and so on. His famous books are *The Bachelor Of Arts*, *Malgudi Schooldays*, *An Astrologer’s Day*, *The Grandmother’s Tale*, *The English Teacher*, *The Vendor of Sweets* etc. Narayanan’s mentor and friend Graham Greene was instrumental in getting publishers for Narayan’s first four books. Narayan’s short stories have been compared with those of Guy de Maupassant because of his ability to compress a narrative. His third novel, *The Dark Room* was about domestic disharmony, showcasing the man as the oppressor and the woman as the victim within a marriage, and was published by yet another publisher; this book also received good reviews. He received many awards and honours including the AC Benson Medal from the Royal Society of Literature, the Padma Vibhushan and Padma Bhushan, India’s second and third highest civilian awards. He was also nominated to the upper house of India’s parliament.

ABSTRACT - The story revolves around Savitri, her husband Ramani who is working as a secretary in England Insurance Company in Malgudi. He is a tyrant in his conduct with his wife, children and house maid; very arrogant, dominating, quick tempered and creates a stifling atmosphere in his house. Savitri embodies the characteristics of a dutiful and faithful wife, exhibiting the qualities of loyalty, honesty and devotion to her husband. Though she is beautiful, Ramani does not appreciate her. She suffers her husband’s wrath in meek silence and relegates her presence to her dark room that is the 'kitchen'. Even after 15 years of marriage and commitment he abuses her often and sees flaws and errors in her service to him. He also reprimands his children even on trivial matters, and he does not show any love and care for his own flesh and blood.

Once his son Babu and his friend Chandra decorated the platform on the occasion of Navrathri festival, Ramani's temper is triggered when he switches the light and it did not

glow. He severely reprimands his son, Savitri interprets and saves the boy from being thrashed. The issue disturbs Savitri to lock herself in one of the rooms and stop interaction with all at home. Ramani went to his office not caring for his wife and children. The children also went to school by the help of the maid servant and returned back and found their mother still locked in the room. In the meantime the daughter Sumathi took the help of the neighbour Jammuna specified Savitri and brought her out of the dark room. At this juncture Savitri's friend named Gangu reveals Ramani's illegitimate affair with a colleague Shantha Bai.

Savitri decides to win her husband back from the claws of Shantha Bai. Unfortunately all her hope is ruthlessly crippled when she fails in her attempt and leaves her husband and children with the intention of ending her life. When she jumps into the fast current of the river, a blacksmith named Mari rescues her. She narrates her story to Mari and his wife Ponni. She hopes to start an independent life away from the tyranny of her husband and married life.

Under the guidance of Ponni, she agrees to work in the village temple but is harassed by the temple priest who molests her yet cannot accept a woman in a male dominated place. She becomes homesick and restless by every passing day, anxious about her children. Her maternal sentiments and brings her back to the home she had left. Her husband is jubilant with joy as her failure, continuing to be heartless to her devotion. Savitiri's life of pain, shame devoid of affection continues as she becomes a symbol of suppressed women who compromise for the sake of family and society under patriarchal men.

KEYWORDS- Dark room, gender, patriarchal men and society.

Introduction: The story of "The Dark Room" written by R K Narayan is about the disturbed and troubled family with domestic conflict. The story involves the characters of Savitri, the wife of Ramani and their two daughters named Sumathi and Kamala and a son named Babu. Babu has a friend named Chandra. Jummana and Gangu is Savitri's friend. Shantha Bai is beloved friend of Ramani who is working in Ramani's company. Mari and Ponni are husband and wife in the village.

The story revolves around Savitri who is the house wife of Ramani who is working as a secretary in England Insurance Company in Malgudi. He is very arrogant, very controlling in his outlook and creates a strict atmosphere in his house too. Due to his rude attitude and always a sense of dreadful misfortune and sadness prevails in his house; he is tyrant in his conduct with his wife, children and house maid.

Savitri embodies the characteristics of a dutiful and faithful wife. She exhibits the qualities of loyalty, honesty and devotion to her husband. Though she is beautiful, Ramani does not appreciate her. She suffers her husband's wrath in meek silence and relegates her presence to her dark room that is the Kitchen. Even after 15 years of marriage and commitment he abuses and condemns her often and sees flaws and errors in her service to him. He also reprimands

his children even on trivial matters, and he does not show any love and care for his own flesh and blood.

Once his son Babu and his friend Chandramade arrangement and decorations with platform, lighting on the occasion of Navrathri festival Ramani expecting something special on this occasion had visuals of dolls and idols, and he switches on the light to have a view, unexpectedly the lights did not glow, he immediately gets angry and shows his anger on his son reprimanding severely, Savitri interprets and saves the son from getting thrashed and subsided the issue.

Due to this petty issue Savitri gets herself locked in one of the rooms and she does not turn up even after a night. The following day Ramani did not care of his wife and children and went to his office. The children also went to school by the help of the maid servant and returned back and found their mother still locked in the room. In the meantime the daughter Sumathi took the help of the neighbour Jammuna who specified Savitri and brought her out of the room. At this juncture Savitri's friend named Gangu who by profession is a teacher tells about the illegitimate affair of her husband with Shantha Bai who is working in her husband's company.

Savitri decides to win her husband back from the claws of Shantha Bai. Unfortunately all her hope is ruthlessly crippled when she fails in her attempt. She gets disturbed and loses her calm, charged with emotions and pain. She leaves her husband and children with an intension of ending her life.

Savitri reaches the river and jumps into the fast current of the river. Here she was rescued by a blacksmith named Mari by his bravery and she sheer good luck. She narrates her story to Mari and his wife Ponni. She hopes it is the start of an independent life away from the tyranny of her husband and married life.

Savitri under the guidance of Ponni agrees to work in the village temple as a Hindu nun. She finds herself broken by various inner conflicts. She was disturbed by the attitude of the temple priest who molests her and hates her working in a male dominated place. She becomes homesick and restless by every passing day and the biggest worry of her are her daughters whom she left at home. She finally succumbs to her grief and motherly sentiments' and decides to return to the same dark room and to her family.

Her husband considers his victory. He continues to be heartless to her devotion and she continues to live a life of pain, shame and self-loathing and devoid of affection.

THEMES: The dark room depicts Savitri as a woman lacking courage to leave her husband and resigned to a life of pain and embracement. She also feels homesick and her biggest worry however is her children whom she has left at home. She becomes succumbs to her grief and motherly sentiments just like every other mother in this world. The unavoidable of

fate and the pointless of her exile dawns on her and she decides to go back to her family and house. She returns to the same 'dark room' that was her prison before.

The story also reflects the patriarchal power of the male dominating in every Indian home as a father, elder brother, husband and in office as authoritative, leadership in organisation, cultural programmes, Politics, temples, churches, sports field, architecture, control of property and many more in the society. This wave is drastically diminishing in all fields of the society because the female children have been brought in higher education fields, legal, political and different cultures.

The main reasons behind the unsatisfactory relationship were the lack of time to interact freely with the husband and lack of time to provide adequate love and care for their children.

The story depicts the sensitive' mind in the human beings, the study of human individual, family relationship, the re union, conflict between tradition and modernity etc. it is also expressed in terms of individuals in flesh and blood and their psychological mind set of the average middle class family of the Indian society.

The Indian families are undergoing vast changes like increasing divorce and separation rates, domestic violence, social problems etc. these changes creates inability to cope with the pressures of the modern life.

Still the majority have survived and are able to cope up, modify, adjust and adapt to the changing social norms, values and structures and have expressed a unique strength in keeping together despite the growing stress and strain in the society.

Conclusion: This short story of R K Narayan gives as a vivid picture of the patriarchal society in India which is dominant throughout the ages. The story also depicts the Indian women's sacrificial nature towards their husband and children's happiness. Even in the present scenario. The present condition of women in India is not far from that of Narayan's time. Even though there are more opportunities' for the women they suffer in silence. They are victims of domestic abuse, physical violence, intimidation, sexual harassment and materialistic greed.

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